

SAINT LUKE
THE
ACTS OF THE
APOSTLES



A NEW TRANSLATION BY
C. H. RIEU

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THE PENGUIN CLASSICS

EDITED BY E. V. RIEU

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THE
ACTS OF THE
APOSTLES
BY
SAINT LUKE

*Translated with
an Introduction and Notes by*
C. H. RIEU

PENGUIN BOOKS

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FOR MY WIFE

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INTRODUCTION

THE virtues of the Authorized Version of the Bible, which appeared in 1611, are well known. It is unfortunate that most of it is no longer intelligible, even to churchgoers. A modern congregation often listens to a reading of one of the Old Testament Prophets or of an Epistle of St Paul with almost no comprehension, and it is possible that the parson is sometimes as mystified as his hearers. What hope can evangelists have, with such a translation, of conveying the truths of the Bible to the pagan or to the half-educated outside the church doors?

One of the main obstacles to our understanding the Authorized Version is the principle of its translators that each Greek word had its English equivalent, and that fidelity to the word of God was best shown by a word for word rendering. Where the Greek language omits words that the English language customarily inserts the translators insert the words but feel almost guilty about it, and declare the deception by printing the words in italics. E.g. Ananias '*kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.*' This principle meant that they often failed to expand a phrase or word that needs expansion to be intelligible. For instance the command to '*refrain from blood*' can mean nothing to readers of the second Elizabethan Age, and could have meant no more to the Jacobean. Principles of translation should entitle one to expand this to '*refrain from flesh from which the blood has not been drained*'.

The proposition that much of the Authorized Version is difficult to understand will be accepted by most churchmen, and non-churchmen must take it as true. It will not then be necessary to instance difficult passages from it. But it may be worth while to say something of the Revised Version, which was completed in 1885. The aim of the revisers was to substitute modern words for words that had changed their meaning, to correct errors of translation and in particular to incorporate in their translation the results of the discovery of more ancient texts than were available to the men of King James' time. The result is a version that is nearer the original Hebrew and Greek, but less beautiful. A fairly typical passage may be considered, from Acts 24.

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'24. But after certain days, Felix came with Drusilla, his wife, which was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ Jesus. 25. And as he reasoned of righteousness, and temperance, and the judgement to come, Felix was terrified, and answered, Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me. 26. He hoped withal that money would be given him of Paul: wherefore also he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him.'

The use of 'which' for 'who', the word 'withal', and the phrase 'convenient season', give the passage a stilted, pretentious air; and the word 'communed' (implying profundity of meditation quite untypical of the shallow Felix) slightly distorts the true meaning of the original.

One of the difficulties, of course, of the modern translator is to shake off memories of Authorized Version phraseology. I must confess that the first draft of my translation was a fearful hotch-potch of new and old. After a while, however, the problem centred round certain phrases and words such as 'preach the word of God', 'witness to the Lord Jesus', 'filled with the Holy Spirit', 'to wait upon God', 'the Way', 'the Faith', and 'the faithful'. These are all found in the Authorized Version, and may have an old-fashioned ring to some. They have, however, become part of Christian thought and living, and therefore timeless, and therefore modern. I have found all of them used by twentieth-century writers.

The task of the modern translator is to get into the mind of the author and to try to find out the words he would have used had he been living today. It is a hard task, involving the 'intolerable wrestle with words and meaning'. One of the great dangers in the attempt to use modern words is that of the slang phrase and the chatty style. Anyone who has had experience of reading one of the more colloquial modern translations of the Bible aloud to congregations or groups will vouch for the embarrassment they can cause, even now. In twenty years they will appear as ludicrous as the slang and the ladies' hats of the 1920s. There is a deep instinct in us which demands that the language with which we treat or discuss religious matters should not be undignified or too informal. Translating the Bible presents different problems from translating, for example, most of the Classics that have appeared in this series.

The central principle of translation suggested in the last para-

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graph – using the words one thinks the author would have used had he been writing today – cannot in the very nature of things create an illusion that the events described are of recent occurrence, even were that desirable. Different customs and modes of thought preclude that. Men do not wear white robes and girdles nowadays. It is not the theory of modern psychiatry that madness is caused by an evil spirit entering into a man, possessing him, and speaking through his mouth – though it may be true. The modern method of execution is not by stoning or crucifixion. There is obviously no question of bringing such things up to date along with the language.

The modern translator has one means of rendering the meaning clear not available to or not used by the translators of the Authorized Version and the Revised Version – typographical devices. Among these I have used single inverted commas to indicate speech and double inverted commas to indicate speech within a speech; italics to indicate quotations from the Old Testament; the setting out of prophetic utterances from the Old Testament as poetry; footnotes where I think Luke would have used them; paragraphing; small capitals for words that need special emphasis; and the dash to indicate that the speaker has, under the influence of a new idea or an emotion, broken off his sentence. None of these useful aids to speedy reading and intelligibility were employed by the scribes of ancient times. For ease of reference I have kept the notation of chapter and verse, but relegated the figures to the margin where they do not obtrude but are available if sought. For the convenience of the reader I have divided the book into sections, and the titles are mine not Luke's.

The language in which the New Testament was written is not Hebrew, nor Aramaic (the language spoken by the Palestinian Jews of the time), but Greek, which was the universal language of the Roman Empire. It was not like the Greek of Classical times, but far simpler. It is called the *koiné*, which means 'common'. Jesus and his disciples would have talked Aramaic among themselves but the *koiné* to Roman officials such as Pontius Pilate, as Paul did to Felix and Festus. After Jesus' death his sayings and stories about him, in Aramaic, circulated among the disciples and were put in standardized form for teaching purposes and the name by which they are known is the *Didaché*; which means 'instruction'. When Christianity began to spread to the Gentiles and beyond the bounds of

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Palestine it was translated into the *koiné* – otherwise it would not have been understood. When the four writers of the Gospels wrote, they wrote in Greek, and the *Didaché* was one of their sources. Luke wrote a more literary Greek than the others, for he was a Gentile and, so most think, a Greek. What they wrote was then copied, and the copies copied, and then those copied. The question is, How closely does the Greek we now have correspond to the Greek that they wrote?

We have three main sources from which we can attempt to discover what they wrote. First there are actual Greek manuscripts, about 1500 of them, in book form (when they are called codices) or scroll form, on papyrus, parchment, or vellum. They are copies of copies of the original. Some of the papyri date from the third century, but the earliest complete codex dates from the fourth. Secondly there are translations of the Greek into various languages, Latin, Syriac, Egyptian, etc., the earliest dating from the second century. Thirdly there are quotations from the Greek by what are traditionally called the 'Early Church Fathers', Christian bishops and divines, in their writings and sermons. These quotations are in various languages besides Greek, and date from the late second century onwards. The use of these second two sources – translations and quotations – can best be indicated by pointing out that if every copy of Shakespeare in English were destroyed we might make a fairly accurate reconstruction of most of his plays from German, French, and other translations, and from quotations from them in English and foreign writers.

Scholars have minutely examined the documents in this formidable mass of material, and have found that they can be classified under one of five categories, and all the versions under any one category have a strong family likeness. The five groups are:

1. The Byzantine Text (otherwise known as the Received Text), a text which, standardized in Byzantium (Constantinople) in the fifth century, acquired a dominance over other texts and tended to oust them. Our earliest copy is of the fifth century. The translators of the Authorized Version based their version on an edition of this text that appeared in 1550. This text is now considered unreliable. The most telling proof is that the New Testament quotations found in the earlier Church Fathers are not taken from it.

2. The Alexandrian Text, the text as revised by the scholars of

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Alexandria in the second and third centuries, and now considered the most reliable of all. The earliest existing copies of it are of the fourth century, and are thus a hundred years older than any copy of the Byzantine text. They are the famous Codex Vaticanus, which has been in the Vatican since 1475; and the Codex Sinaiticus, found at the Monastery of Mt Sinai by the German scholar Tischendorf and bought by the British Museum in 1935 for £100,000. The Codex Alexandrinus, also in the British Museum, dates from the fifth century, and though 'Alexandrian' in the 'Acts' is perversely 'Byzantine' in the Gospels.

3. The Western Text, best represented by the Bezan Codex, a sixth-century manuscript named after its one-time owner Theodore Beza, and now in the University Library of Cambridge. It is a fascinating text. It has several interesting additions not found in the other texts. For example, in describing Peter's escape from prison with the angel it inserts the phrase in italics – 'They passed through the door, *went down seven steps*, and went along one street'. (12. 10.) Again, when Simon the Magician is rebuked by Peter, the Bezan text adds the information that 'he never stopped weeping copiously'. Such examples have the ring of authenticity, and have led textual critics to suggest that this text was perhaps a rough draft of Luke's, later pruned of interesting irrelevancies. Or alternatively that it was a copy of Luke's original text made by some Christian companion of Peter's or Paul's who had heard the fuller story from their lips or knew the places concerned or had even witnessed the scenes, and had inserted phrases on his own initiative. There are two main reasons why this text on the whole is not considered reliable. First, in many places it reads like the work of a scribe who is carefully 'editing' a manuscript and smoothing out the difficulties by alterations or additions to make the meaning clearer. Secondly, it constantly insists on giving Jesus the full title of 'the Lord Jesus Christ' where other texts are content with one or two of the names, and it sometimes adds phrases like 'in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ'.

4. The Caesarean Text, best represented by the Chester Beatty papyri.

5. The Old Antiochian, from which the old Syriac Gospels were translated.

The text I have followed is the Alexandrian, given in Souter's

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Oxford University Press edition of 1950 and Nestle's Stuttgart edition of 1952. In a few cases I have preferred the Western Text.

Something must be said of the state of the world at the time of the writing of the 'Acts' and the events it describes. This calls for the sketchiest of outlines of history from the 'Classical' times of Greece. It is customary to date the power of Athens as extending from 490, when she defeated the first Persian invasion at Marathon (the English equivalent is the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588), to 404, when she was defeated by her great rival Sparta of Southern Greece, or 399, when she legally murdered her own greatest citizen, Socrates. In the century that followed her downfall the Macedonians, regarded by the Athenians as barbarians, became the great military power, and under Philip and later his son Alexander the Great they conquered first the whole of Greece and then all of what is now Asia Minor and the whole of the Persian Empire as far as the bounds of India. Along the routes which Alexander's armies opened up trade flowed, and Jews established themselves and built their synagogues in the major commercial cities. On his early death in 323 his Empire was divided up between his generals. His conquests, with the previous colonizing activity of Athens and other Greek towns, ensured that Greek, the *koiné*, became the established common language of all the countries bordering the Eastern Mediterranean. It was, of course, a much simpler Greek than that talked by Sophocles and Socrates, though nothing so debased as 'pidgin' English. And where Greek and the Greeks went, there went their culture, their good taste, and, most important from the point of view of one studying the spread of Christianity described in the 'Acts', their inquiring minds and openness to new ideas.

Meanwhile another great power, Rome, had gradually been coming to the fore further west. In a series of gory struggles from the fifth century downwards Rome had gradually worn down all her enemies, great and small – Carthage, Greece, Syria, the Gauls of France, the Germanic tribes, and the Britons. Rome's policy was ruthless, successful, and probably for the ultimate good of humanity. It was defined by her greatest poet Virgil as 'being merciful to those who give in and battering down those who resist',* a policy exemplified by Julius Caesar in Gaul. He found his 'well-known clemency' abused by the Gallic tribes, who kept on revolting

* '*Parcere subiectis et debellare superbos.*' Virgil, *Aeneid* vi, 853.

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directly his back was turned, so to set an example cut off the hands of all men who had taken part in the defence of a city called Uxellodunum. There was no more trouble for a long time.

Some years after the great Emperor Augustus had defeated all his rivals in Rome and obtained supreme power (30 B.C.) the Roman Empire extended from the Euphrates to the Danube, the Rhine, and Britain. And when Rome had conquered all her enemies peace descended on the earth and Christ came down from heaven.

There are several important points about the Romans and their empire that need to be mentioned for the light they shed on the 'Acts'. They divided their empire into provinces, and connected them by their famous roads. The governors of provinces that were under the Emperor's supreme control had the title of Legate (like Quirinius, Governor of Syria at the time of the birth of Christ) or, in the case of minor provinces, Procurator (like Felix and Festus in Judaea). The governors of provinces under the Senate's authority had that of Proconsul (like Gallio in Achaia and Sergius Paulus in Cyprus). One of the duties of the governors was to administer the law. The only appeal was to the Emperor. This appeal was open only to 'Roman citizens'. This citizenship belonged by birth to all the free inhabitants of Italy, but in addition it could be earned or bought, like knighthoods today. Possession of Roman citizenship secured a man immunity from scourging and crucifixion—he was beheaded instead.

The Romans enforced the peace they had forcibly established – the famous Pax Romana – with their legions. The trouble spot Judaea called for a permanent garrison of five cohorts in the Roman capital Caesarea, and a garrison of one cohort in the Fort of Antonia in the Jewish capital Jerusalem. Perhaps even more efficacious in preserving imperial peace was the creation or establishment of Roman 'colonies', often consisting of ex-soldiers, in places where danger threatened. It immediately became the interest of the colony to see that peace was preserved, and so Roman arms were released for other areas. Among the colonies mentioned in the 'Acts' are Pisidian Antioch, Troas, Philippi, and Corinth.

The inhabitants of the empire paid for the privilege of being ruled, by paying taxes – which Jesus said they should pay ('Render unto Caesar ...').

When the Romans established their rule over an empire once partly ruled by Greece and Macedonia they inherited two important

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things, the Greek language and the Jewish problem. It has been reckoned that at the time of Christ the Jews of the Dispersion numbered 7,500,000, 7 per cent of the population of the Empire. They were regarded with mixed emotions. They were detested by the ordinary people because they were different: they didn't eat shellfish or pork; they were exempted from military service; and they regarded themselves as God's elect, and owed a higher allegiance to Jehovah and Jerusalem than to the local deities and authorities. At Rome itself the treatment accorded them varied with the whim of the Emperor. They were exposed to pogroms or protected, expelled or recalled, according to imperial preference. Their high ideals and monotheism, however, attracted many of the more thoughtful Romans and citizens of the Empire, who had grown tired of the various religions or religion-substitutes available. There were then two courses open to such Gentiles. They could either become full proselytes of Judaism, which entailed a ceremony of immersion in water, the offering of a sacrifice, and above all the unpleasant minor operation of circumcision. They were in this way admitted to the religious duties and privileges of all Jews. The second course was less drastic, and involved merely attending synagogues for worship and observing certain Jewish customs such as the food-laws. The people in this category were called 'those who fear God', and of course that is the Authorized Version translation of the term. I myself could find nothing less cumbrous than 'observers of Jewish religious customs'. Such a man was the Roman centurion at Caesarea, Cornelius.* The synagogues were a factor of at least as great importance as the existence of Roman roads, Roman peace, and Greek language and culture in enabling the religion of Paul and his companions to conquer half the Roman Empire in thirty years. A knowledge of these and the other factors mentioned in this brief survey of the history and the times makes one realize that the task of Paul was in many ways less difficult than that of the nineteenth-century missionary landing on a cannibal island or setting forth into the African jungle and finding no communications, no basis of culture, and no common language.

Such was the world into which the author of the 'Acts' was born. Who was he? From the end of the second century A.D. it wa:

* Other soldiers, like some of those in London, preferred to worship the Persian god Mithras.

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generally agreed by the Early Church Fathers that the 'Acts' and the Third Gospel were written by the same author, that the author was Luke and that he was the doctor companion of Paul mentioned in Paul's Letter to the Colossians, 'Luke the beloved physician' (Col. 4. 14).

Even apart from the evidence of the early Church an examination of the two books themselves would convince us that they came from the same hand. Both works begin with an elegant dedication, in Classical Greek, to 'Your Excellency Theophilus', and the dedication of the 'Acts' refers back to 'my first book'. There are also striking similarities of language, style, and outlook in the two works. The Greek of both is more literary than that of the other Gospel-writers, and the vocabulary is far wider: about 750 words occur that are not used by the others. Both reveal an unusual power of telling a gripping story: one compares the vividness of the story of the woman who stood weeping at Jesus' feet and then dried them with her hair, with the account of Peter's knocking on the gate after his escape from prison, when the maid is so excited at discovering who is there that she forgets to open the door and runs back to tell the others. These two stories serve also to illustrate another quality shared by the two books – their author's sympathy for women and interest in their activities, more typical of the Greeks of the period than of the Jews. (Jesus' interest in them was frowned on by his disciples.)

It is now accepted by most scholars that Luke was the companion of Paul on some of his travels. The best evidence is the so-called 'we-passages' (16. 10–17; 20. 5 to 21. 18; 27. 1 to 28. 16), in which the author passes from the third person to the first person plural, referring not to 'he' and 'they' but to 'we'. These passages, which include the famous shipwreck on Malta, have a brilliance of description and circumstantiality of fact that surpass even the best of the rest of the narrative, and can only have come from an eye-witness. The style of the 'we-passages' is identical with that of the remainder, and they form an integral part of the narrative, so there is no valid reason to doubt their authenticity. It is part of Luke's charming modesty never to mention himself by name; he unobtrusively indicates his presence by this simple expedient of changing the person.

The internal evidence that his Gospel and the 'Acts' can provide for Luke's being a doctor is thin. But when we know from Paul that

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he was a doctor we can find in them additional evidence of the fact. He shows a marked interest in miracles of healing; in food, the effect of it and of the lack of it (as during the storm at sea); and in the curing of the sick (as in Malta). Some scholars have detected – others have of course denied – a close acquaintance with medical terminology. For instance, the word used for the corners of the white cloth that Peter saw (10.11) is a word used by doctors for the ends of bandages and the word for the cloth itself is a doctor's word for bandage. Luke's presence with Paul after his escape from lynching in the Temple at Jerusalem, and during his journey to Rome shortly after the ordeal of his imprisonment and trial at Caesarea, may possibly be accounted for by the fact that Paul needed medical attention.

Of Luke's life we know nothing for certain except what we can gather from the 'Acts' and Paul's Letters. There are three references to him in the Letters, one of which has already been mentioned. His name, Loucas, is Greek, and most scholars think he was a Greek, though some maintain that he was a Jew. Certainly his style, his mind, and his outlook are more Greek than Hebraic. Tradition gives Antioch in Syria as his birthplace. An early document (A.D. 170) says 'Luke was a man of Antioch in Syria, a doctor by profession. He was a disciple of the apostles and later accompanied Paul until his martyrdom. He served the Lord without distraction, for he had no wife or children, and died at the age of 83 in Boeotia, full of the Holy Spirit.' How much of this is true we cannot say. He is supposed by some to show a special interest in Christian activities at Antioch, but I cannot see it. Sir William Ramsay (see Bibliography) thinks he was born in Antioch but a Greek nevertheless, being a descendant of one of the powerful Macedonian families which settled in the empire that Alexander the Great of Macedon established, and this accounts for the interest he shows in the Macedonian city Philippi. It would also account for his interest in birth, rank, and position. What does seem probable is that at some early date he was converted to Judaism. His work shows that he had consulted Aramaic sources, and the early chapters of the 'Acts' indicate a familiarity with the Old Testament not likely to be found in a mere outside observer of Judaism.* Moreover he is extremely

* The prose-poems on the model of the Psalms found at the beginning of his Gospel cannot be used as evidence, for they are almost certainly not his own composition.

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familiar with Jewish terms and customs. He gives us an account of a synagogue service, and indicates the time of year by reference to Jewish Feasts and Fasts – the Passover, the Atonement. His indignation against the Jews can be accounted for by their opposition to Paul and the new ‘Way’.

Who converted him to Christianity, and when and where, we do not know. He probably first met Paul at Troas, where the first ‘we-passage’ begins, and was probably left in charge of the newly founded church at Philippi when Paul went on to Thessalonica. The first ‘we-passage’ ends at Philippi and the second begins there, when Paul stops there on his way to Jerusalem. Luke evidently made this journey too, and was there at Paul’s arrest, and during his two years’ imprisonment at Caesarea, and on his journey to Rome. He was probably at hand during Paul’s imprisonment at Rome, for he is referred to in the Letter to Philemon (written about 60–61) – ‘Greetings from ... and Luke, my fellow-labourers’ (Phil. 23, 24). He is mentioned a third time in Paul’s Letter to Timothy written from prison shortly before the end – ‘Luke alone is with me’ (II. 4. 11). (This letter, however, is considered by many scholars to have been written in the second century, long after Paul’s death, so its evidence is unreliable.) How Luke was martyred, or whether he was martyred, we do not know.

From Paul we know that Luke was much loved and loyal – ‘the beloved physician’ – and the evidence of the ‘Acts’ bears him out. The overriding impression made on us as we read is of a delightful and sympathetic person, the ideal companion, interested in everyone and everything. He is fascinated by the things that go on in a ship, and even during a storm he counts the number of anchors the sailors drop and notes that they drop them from the stern instead of from the usual place, the bows. He finds money and money motives interesting, and calculates the value of the books of magic publicly burned by the Ephesians on their conversion. He finds out the constitution and the method of administration of each town he visits.

He is interested in people of all temperaments, ranks, and classes, and both sexes – the young man Eutychus who went to sleep in a sermon by Paul; the lame beggar who was so excited by his cure that he could not stop jumping about and shouting; the Roman pro-consul Gallio who was politely bored by points of Jewish Law; the

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unfortunate slave-girl whose owners made a living out of her fortune-telling. He understands people, and this accounts for the distinctive quality he imparts to the speeches of all kinds of men – the verbosity of the pompous advocate Tertullus; the clichés of the guildmaster Demetrius; the cool irony of the Mayor of Ephesus; and the horror of the lowbrow Roman Governor Festus when confronted with ideas.

His interest in people is always kindly. He often mentions the kindness of others – the kindness of the Roman tribune in taking an overawed boy by the hand; the kindness of the Roman centurion in allowing Paul to go and be tended by his friends; the kindness of the natives of Malta; and the kindness of the Christians of Rome in coming forty miles to welcome Paul. His own kindness makes him take the most charitable view of people compatible with realism. John Mark's desertion of his travelling companions and return to Jerusalem is briefly stated, but the emotional distress it must have occasioned is passed over in silence, and similarly with the subsequent quarrel between Paul and Barnabas about Mark.

There is no inability to recognize vices and selfish motives. He observes the self-justification of the tribune Lysias, the cowardice and selfishness of the sailors; he notes the grumbling and dishonesty over money in the early church; he is aware of the economic motives prompting opposition to Christianity in the case of the slave-girl and the silversmiths of Ephesus. But he does not take a malicious pleasure in human failings, nor is he exasperated by them. The only thing that really stirs his indignation is the brutality and bitterness of the Jewish opposition to Paul. But how calm and controlled are his emotions compared with Paul's violent tirades against them in his Letters! His equable temperament must have been a comfort and a steadying influence on Paul on many occasions of stress and distress.

Luke is not exasperated by human frailty because his basic belief was that out of good came forth good, and out of evil good also. Where he records faults or troubles he always concludes by describing the cure or the solution. The account of the grumbling among the poorer Christians is followed by his description of the appointment of 'The Seven' to deal with the administration of charity. He describes how the killing of Stephen led to the scattering of the disciples and consequent evangelization of Samaria and Antioch

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and how the conflict over the circumcision of the Gentiles was settled by the Council of Jerusalem. A particularly revealing instance is his treatment of Paul's fits of depression or loss of heart. He makes no direct reference but leaves us to infer their existence by simply recording that 'his spirits revived' (28. 15) or that the Lord visited him in a vision and urged him to put aside his fears (18. 9).

The basic moods of the 'Acts' are joy and optimism, founded on faith in Christ. The book reflects the heart of the man. No wonder Paul liked to have Luke with him, or that he records that he was much loved, for Luke loved much. It seems possible that Paul had Luke in mind when he was composing his description of the quality of love in 1 Corinthians 13 - 'Love suffereth long and is kind; love envieth not; love ... is not puffed up; ... seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but in the truth; believeth all things, hopeth all things.'

Now from the man back to the book - its date, its style, its sources, its authenticity, and its aim. The date of the writing of Luke's Gospel and the 'Acts' is still usually assessed as in the 80s A.D. The main argument for this late date hinges on the date of the Jewish war with Rome, 66-70, and the sack of Jerusalem by the Romans (70) which terminated it. The argument runs: Mark, the earliest Gospel, gives Jesus' prophecy of disasters in Judaea in general terms (chapter 13), but Luke is far more specific. In Luke 19. 43 Jesus is recorded as saying 'Your enemies shall fix a palisade around you', and in 21. 20f. 'When you see armies closing round Jerusalem, know that her desolation is at hand ... Pagan feet will tread Jerusalem till pagan days are done.' Luke, it is argued, altered the version he found in Mark to make the prophecy fit the facts after the event. Therefore Luke wrote his Gospel after A.D. 70, and his second book, the 'Acts', after that. The argument is not conclusive. The description of the siege and the sack are in general terms and could apply to almost any siege of any town. Jerusalem had been sacked and the Holy of Holies desecrated four times in the previous 500 years, and it did not need Jesus to prophesy that Jewish intransigence was leading to war with Rome, or who would win.

The evidence seems to point to the period of Paul's imprisonment in Rome, namely 60-62, for the composition of the 'Acts', and

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Luke's Gospel too.* It is unlikely that Paul was kept in prison for more than two years, and likely that he was either set free or tried and acquitted. In 64 Nero began the dramatic persecution of the Christians for which he is chiefly famous. In 67, it is thought, Peter and Paul were martyred. Can anyone who reads the last eight chapters of 'Acts', which describe Paul's capture, preliminary trials, and journey to Rome for trial by the Emperor, believe that if Luke had known of Paul's trial or acquittal or condemnation he would not have mentioned it? Or that the 'Acts', with its cool defence of Christianity, its calm optimism about it, and its unfeigned approval of Roman rule and law, was written after Nero's lions had been let loose on the Christians? Or that Luke knew about the martyrdom of Peter and Paul when he was writing? Or that he would have refrained from mentioning or hinting at retribution to come on the Jews if he had known about the sack of Jerusalem? It may be taken as likely, then, that the 'Acts' was written when the reader imagines it was written, during the two years of Paul's imprisonment described in the final paragraph, and the date for that we can fix with some certainty as 60-62. And the material for the 'Acts' and the Gospel was probably collected in Judaea during Paul's captivity in Caesarea, 57-59.

Luke is a stylist. In analysing his style it is difficult to say more than that his thoughts find the best words. He excels in graphic accounts of scenes of action, and his success lies in his economy of detail, his understanding of men, and his habit of giving their actual words. The earthquake in Philippi is a good example (16). It begins: 'At midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, with the other prisoners listening, when suddenly ...' Another impressive piece of narrative is the account of the attempt by the Jews to lynch Paul in the Temple, his rescue by the Romans, his request to the tribune to address the mob and the silence that fell as he began (21).

The Greek Luke writes is good Greek of the Hellenistic† period (the *koiné*). It is somewhat more literary than that of the other

* I hope it will not be considered a breach of filial piety to differ from Dr E. V. Rieu, who in his Introduction to *The Four Gospels* tentatively gives A.D. 85 as the date of Luke's Gospel.

† The adjective describes Greek language and culture when it spread outside the bounds of Greece proper in the centuries after the power of Greece waned.

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Gospel writers. In his account of the storm and shipwreck he uses phrases reminiscent of Homer. He sometimes writes good Classical Greek, as in Paul's speech to the Council in Athens and his speech to Agrippa. In the early chapters his Greek is strongly tinged with Semitisms – Aramaic or Hebrew (such as 'it came to pass', 'opened his mouth and said'). The Hebrew idioms are not direct from the Hebrew, which he probably did not know, but come via the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament made for the Jews of the Dispersion* when they were forgetting their Hebrew. The Semitisms are an indication of Luke's fidelity as a historian.

This brings us to Luke's sources for his history. For the second half of the book, 12. 25 onwards, he could have relied mainly on the evidence of Paul and sometimes on his own eyes as well. Various sources must have contributed to the first half. For the death of Stephen and the conversion of Paul he could have had no better witness than Paul himself. Philip the Evangelist is the obvious origin for the evangelizing of Samaria and the baptizing of the Ethiopian eunuch. Peter and Mark could have told Luke about Peter's imprisonment, escape, and arrival at the house of Mark's mother Mary. The earliest passages in the book, the Ascension, Pentecost, the early church, and the preaching and imprisonment of Peter and John may have come from those two Apostles themselves. The stories in this last group have a strongly Aramaic tinge, and it is considered likely that they had been circulated and become standardized for some years before Luke heard them. A similar kind of oral tradition is to be found in the 'proof-texts' (usually called *testimonia*). These were collections of quotations from the Old Testament, with appropriate explanations, intended to prove such Christian beliefs as that Jesus was the Messiah. The Church leaders made these collections, which could then be used for the instruction of novices or arguments in the home. The speech of Stephen abounds in them, as do those of Peter.

A question which the reader cannot help asking about the speeches in the 'Acts' is, How far do they correspond with what was actually said? It was the accepted custom of ancient historians to put speeches into the mouths of the main figures, and sometimes these had no basis of fact but were imaginative creations of the

* This is the term commonly used to denote the Jews outside Judaea.

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historian. Luke follows the practice, but there is good evidence that he was indebted more to his researches than to his imagination. The early speeches in the 'Acts' for instance indicate an undeveloped theology in their talk of the hope of the repentance of all Israel (2. 36, 38) and the speedy inauguration of the Messianic Age (3. 18-20). The speech of James, the brother of the Lord, (15. 13-21) is very Hebraic in language and matter, and he refers to Peter by his Hebrew name Symeon. The much later speech of Paul to the Ephesian elders (20. 18 f.) contains many of the ideas expounded by Paul in his Letters, including the well-known belief in justification by faith, and Luke could not have concocted the speech from the Letters, for it is quite evident that he was not familiar with them. They were not, in fact, collected into a body and circulated till much later, about A.D. 90. As to Paul's speech to the Council at Athens, it is so Pauline that no one could have invented it – except Paul.

The narrative gives indication of the same accuracy and painstaking research as the speeches, and bears out the claim Luke made in his Dedication of his Gospel: 'Seeing that many have undertaken to arrange in narrative form such accounts of the momentous happenings in our midst as have been handed down to us by the original eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word, I too have thought fit, having kept in close touch with the whole course of these events, to write a history, which I dedicate to you, Theophilus, in the hope of bringing home to Your Excellency the truth of what you have already learnt.' (The sentence, incidentally, shows what Luke could do in the way of the grand style when he wished.) Two examples of his historical accuracy will be sufficient. He mentions (17. 6) the 'politarchs' of Thessalonica, i.e. the 'city-rulers', 'magistrates'. It used to be considered that he had made a mistake, but in the last century an inscription was found at Thessalonica (Salonica) bearing the word 'politarch', and this and more recent finds prove that it was the technical Macedonian term for 'magistrate'. Again (13. 7) he mentions the 'proconsul Sergius Paulus' of Cyprus. Now the Province Cyprus had originally been under the Emperor, and the governor would then have been a legate; but at the time of Barnabas' and Saul's visit it was under the Senate, and governed by a proconsul. An inscription, incidentally, has been found bearing his name. So if Luke is correct in points where we can check him

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we may feel justified in crediting his accuracy when we cannot.

Luke is careful about his dates. As in the Gospel, e.g. for the birth of Christ (2. 1-2), and the beginning of the ministry of John the Baptist (3. 1-3), he gives dates whenever he can. It is because of this that we can feel reasonably confident about the time sequence for the latter part of the 'Acts'. We cannot be so sure of the dating of the events of the first part, for instead of giving dates he uses vague phrases like 'about this time', or 'in these days'. The reason is that he did not know more accurately than that. Both the giving of dates and the refraining from conjecturing them are indications of his reliability.

The only cases where Luke strikes me at any rate as being un-historical in the modern sense are his accounts of the Ascension (1), the events of Pentecost (2), and the raising of Eutychus (20). I have indicated in the notes what I believe to be the truth of these events.

Luke's purpose in writing his Gospel, as its Prologue shows, was to make a record that would substantiate the account of previous writers and reinforce the truths they had to tell. His Gospel dealt with the birth, life, and death of Jesus. His 'Acts of the Apostles' tells how under the influence of the Holy Spirit, which Jesus told them God would send, they continued his work. The Old Testament describes the ways of God the Father with man, the Gospels the ways of God the Son, and the 'Acts' the ways of God the Holy Spirit. Luke's title is the 'Acts of the Apostles', but he makes it clear that the power behind the Apostles was the Spirit. That is the reason why the Spirit descending was chosen as the medallion for the cover of this book, which is the story of how a succession of men, in spite of persecution, suffering, and evil without and within, carried the Word from Jerusalem to the boundaries and then to the heart of the known world.

What impresses one about Luke is the undeviating purposefulness with which he carries out his plan. There are all sorts of interesting things we might wish him to tell us,* but he excludes everything except the steps of advancement and the men who made them. The Gospel is accepted first by the Jews, then in turn by proselytes to Judaism, such as Nicolas of Antioch; by the Samaritans, a Semitic people but hated by the Jews; by an Ethiopian eunuch, who would

* I personally would have liked a description of the physical appearance and expression of Paul, and an account of how and when Peter reached Rome.

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have been excluded from becoming a full proselyte to Judaism by the fact of his being a eunuch; by the Roman centurion Cornelius, a mere 'observer of Jewish religious customs'; and finally by Gentiles. Geographically the Gospel spreads at first by small leaps and finally by great bounds from Jerusalem to Samaria, the rest of Judaea, Antioch in Syria, Cyprus and the southern shores of Asia Minor, the eastern seaboard of the Aegean, Macedonia, Greece, and finally by the inexorable but incalculable pressure of the Spirit to Rome.

A subsidiary purpose of Luke in writing the 'Acts' seems to have been to offer a reasoned defence of Christianity against popular criticisms and misconceptions, and to create a favourable climate of opinion for its growth, perhaps particularly in Rome and especially in high and powerful circles. In his Gospel he had shown how Pontius Pilate and Herod both considered Jesus innocent of treason or any other crime. In the 'Acts' he is at pains to relate that Roman, Jewish, and other officials considered Paul innocent – Gallio, the Mayor of Ephesus, Felix, Festus, Herod Agrippa II – and to point out that Paul was accepted and approved by men and women of high standing and repute. Luke failed in this purpose.

The two main Apostles whose 'Acts' the book records are Peter and Paul. In the eyes of the Christians at Jerusalem Peter was immeasurably the superior: he had been the right-hand man of Jesus, whereas Paul had never even known him in the flesh. From Galatians I and 2 and II Corinthians 12 we learn that the genuineness of Paul's apostleship was sometimes called in question; after all it depended on his word alone. Paul, however, is clearly Luke's hero, and he attempts to redress the balance. To begin with, he parallels about a score of things that happened to Peter by identical happenings to Paul: both received a second name at a crisis in their lives, both were arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin, both performed cures unwittingly (by their shadow or by their clothes), both raised the dead, and both received the homage of a Gentile. In passing it may be said that the parallelism is so marked and so frequent that some scholars believe the facts must have been falsified to create it. But Luke was only shedding light on a parallel that already existed. After all, all of these things happened to Jesus, and the nearer men get to their Master the more likely are they to suffer his afflictions and achieve what he achieved. Anyway, having established Paul's

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equality with Peter, Luke proceeds to tell of activities of Paul's never attempted by Peter.

It is beyond the scope of this introduction to make a full study of all the Apostles mentioned in the 'Acts'. Enough is already known to most, or will appear in the narrative or is mentioned in the notes, about the gay Philip, the ardent Stephen, the tactful Barnabas and the great Peter. But something must be said about Paul.

The translator of *The Four Gospels* in this series says about Jesus in his introduction – 'Superimposed on all my previous impressions is one of power, tremendous power, utterly controlled.' The impression made by Paul is one of tremendous power, partly controlled. Emotionality like his is never completely controlled this side of the grave. He was, as we know from his Letters, a whirlwind of passions. Hate, anger, and depression jostle with tenderness, love, and hope, and all in extremes. Only a small part of this emotionality comes out in the 'Acts', for Luke has a quietening influence on Paul in death as he must have had in life. But the emotions are here. Mention has already been made of his fits of depression and losses of courage. When he is hit in the face during his trial before the Sanhedrin he loses his temper and lets fly a glorious insult at the brutal High Priest who had ordered him to be struck, but then regains control of himself with a struggle (23). During his hearing before Felix he bursts out indignantly about the Jews who had falsely accused him of bringing Gentiles into the Temple (24).

But these failings are warm and human; one can love a person in spite of them. Paul, however, had other less attractive faults. He was egotistical and boastful. In the 'Acts' the clearest example is his telling the sailors during the storm that God had informed him that their lives would be spared for his sake (27. 24). His Letters display far more of his egotism than Luke does. There is, for instance, his anxiety to show that he was independent of the other Apostles (Gal. 1 and 2) and that he had laboured more and suffered more than they (II Cor. 11 and 12).

In addition there is a harshness and even a brutality about Paul. Most critics appear to think that his own trials, scourgings, and final martyrdom make up for his original persecuting, whipping, and imprisoning of Christians. So they do, in a way, and he himself regarded his sufferings as retribution in kind. Nevertheless the deeds could not be undone and he did them: in his full and developed man-

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hood (for Jews did not enter on public life till they were 30) he indulged in brutal persecution that reminds one of the Inquisition. He used violence on people because their beliefs were not his own – yet. Those readers who are familiar with his Letters will be able to call to mind instances of an overbearing manner and ruthlessness even after his conversion.

Many people must be aware of this side of his nature, especially perhaps women. They have further reason for not finding him a sympathetic character – his views on them. I do not refer to his opinion that women should cover their heads while worshipping in church (1 Cor. 11. 5 f.). Ramsay in his book *The Cities of St Paul* (written 1907) has given what must be accepted as a final vindication of such views at such a time in history or even in 1907: 'In Oriental lands the veil is the power and the honour and the dignity of the woman. With her veil on her head she can go anywhere in security and profound respect. ... The man who did anything to annoy or molest her would have a bad time in an Oriental town and might easily lose his life. ... But without the veil the woman is a thing of nought, whom anyone may insult.' No, what I refer to are his views about women and marriage set out in 1 Corinthians 7 and 11, particularly 'The man was not created for the woman's sake but the woman for the man.' The view was Jewish – the Genesis account of the creation of Adam and Eve illustrates it – but backed by Paul's immense authority it dominated men's thinking and ruined many marriages up to Milton's time. It is a pity that Paul never had an opportunity to talk with Jesus about it. Nevertheless there is plenty of evidence in the 'Letters' and the 'Acts' that many women were devoted to Paul and he to them. Certainly men grew very fond of him, as for example Luke, or the Ephesian elders, who had known him for two or three years: 'They all burst into tears and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him again and again, deeply distressed by his saying that they would never see him again.' (20. 37, 38.) Like his Master he caused violent splits and divisions wherever he went, but those who loved him were loyal to him. And the man who wrote the most famous definition of love that the world has ever known (1 Cor. 13) must have known something about the emotion.

A suggestion of the great power that lay in him is conveyed by a description of him in a document called 'The Acts of Paul and Thecla', written about A.D. 160 – 'a man of small stature, somewhat

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bald, with crooked legs, strong, with meeting eyebrows and hooked nose, full of grace; sometimes he seemed like a man, while at others he had the face of an angel.' This incidentally bears out the impression gained from 14. 12 that he was small and insignificant compared with Barnabas: the natives take Barnabas for Zeus, the king of the Gods, and Paul for his messenger Hermes. The wiry strength and powers of recuperation of Paul are shown by the way in which after being stoned and left for dead at Lystra he picked himself up and next day travelled thirty miles.* At Philippi after a beating with the rods we find him praying and singing hymns at midnight. In the 'Acts' he is never actually scourged, and only shipwrecked once, but from 11 Corinthians 11. 24 f. we learn that he was scourged five times and shipwrecked three – 'and what journeys! Danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from the Gentiles, danger in cities, danger in the wilderness, danger on the sea and danger among false brethren.'

He was a man of action and at his best in a crisis, and could act like lightning. When the earthquake breaks open the prison at Philippi he catches a glimpse of a man outside with upraised sword, and immediately realizes the gaoler is about to commit suicide through having failed in his responsibility – and stops him. When the ship is grounded on the rocks off Malta the sailors try to leave the ship in the dinghy under a false pretext. In a flash Paul sees that the safety of all on board depends on their remaining – and prevents them.

The source of his power was Christ and his faith in Him. It would not be easy to find anyone in the whole history of the world who has more devotedly served Our Lord. His words 'Not I, but Christ in me' are his best motto.

Of his life the main events come clear in the 'Acts' and need no mention here. Two points only need be made. First, he made far more than the three 'missionary journeys' conventionally attributed to him. John Knox's comment (in *Chapters in a Life of Paul*) is brief and final – 'If you had met Paul in Ephesus and asked him, "Paul, which of your missionary journeys are you now on?" he would have looked at you blankly without the remotest idea of what was in your mind'. The second point is that by and large the evidence for Paul's movements in the 'Acts' is borne out

* One is reminded of similar incidents in the life of George Fox, the founder of the Quakers.

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by the Letters; they of course supplement, and usually confirm, each other.

Of his death, tradition has it that he was martyred with Peter in Rome, and the date is probably A.D. 67. Peter was crucified in Nero's Circus (now partly covered by St Peter's). Paul, whose Roman citizenship exempted him from that most brutal of deaths, was led out along the road to Ostium and beheaded on the Via Laurentiana at Aquae Silviae. In the church of St Paul's-Without-the-Wall, in the Chapel of the Parting, it is recorded that their last words to each other were these:

Peter to Paul: 'Go in peace, Preacher of glad tidings, Guide of the just in salvation.'

Paul to Peter: 'Peace be with you, Foundation of the Church, Shepherd of the flock of Christ.'

C. H. R.

Canterbury, 1957

TABLE OF DATES

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Birth of Paul	1 B.C.
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Table of Dates

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ter to Timothy	66-7
Martyrdom of Peter and Paul	67
Destruction of Jerusalem	70

N.B. *Many of these dates must be regarded as tentative.*

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I wish in particular to record my indebtedness to Mr H. V. Morton, whose wide reading and interesting approach make both the past and the present scene live; to Rackham's Commentary, in my experience one of the most illuminating and sympathetic commentaries ever written; and above all to Professor F. F. Bruce, of the Department of Biblical History and Literature in the University of Sheffield. His Commentary has been at my side in every verse I tackled, and in addition he has been kind enough to read all this book in typescript. For his corrections and suggestions I am most grateful.

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THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

PROLOGUE

IN my first book, Theophilus, I described the work and teaching of Jesus from the beginning up to the day when, inspired by the Holy Spirit, he gave his commands to his chosen apostles and was taken up to heaven. He had given them many proofs that he was alive after his passion. He had appeared to them at various times over a period of forty days and talked of the kingdom of God, and after a meal with them had ordered them not to leave Jerusalem. 'Wait here,' he had said to them, 'till the Father's promise is fulfilled. I have already told you of that promise. It is that before many days have passed you will be baptized, not with water as John baptized, but with the Holy Spirit.'

THE ASCENSION

One day when the Apostles had met they asked Jesus, 'Lord, are you going to re-establish the kingdom of Israel now?'

'It is not for you to know when and how that will happen,' he replied. 'It is in God's hands. But you will be given power, when the Holy Spirit has come to you. And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in the rest of Judaea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the world.'

When he had said this he was taken up, and hidden from their view by a cloud. They were still gazing up to heaven as he went when two men in white suddenly appeared at their side and said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand there looking up to heaven? Jesus, who has been taken from you up to heaven, will come back in the same way as you saw him go.'

They then left Mount Olivet and walked the short distance back to Jerusalem. They went into the house and up to the

The Acts of the Apostles

- room where they were staying. The names of these men are Peter and John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and
- 14 Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. In company with Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the other women and the brothers of Jesus they stayed together and led a life of prayer.
- 15 Not long after this, at a meeting of the Brotherhood, who altogether now numbered about one hundred and twenty, Peter said,
- 16-20 'Brothers, the prophecy about Judas^{*} has come true, as it was sure to do. It was made by the Holy Spirit speaking through the mouth of David. In the Book of Psalms are the words: *Let his homestead be desolate, And let no man dwell in it; and again, Let another man take over his duties.* Now Judas, who acted as guide to those who arrested Jesus, was
- 21, 22 one of us and shared in our ministry. In his place we need someone to be a fellow-witness of Jesus' resurrection, someone from among those who have been members of our company all the time the Lord Jesus was with us as our leader, from the early days when he was baptized by John up to the day when he was taken up from us.'
- 23 Two names were put forward, Joseph Barsabas 'The
- 24 Just', and Matthias, and a prayer was offered: 'O Lord, you who know the hearts of men, show which of these two you
- 25 have chosen to take the place in our ministry and apostleship from which Judas fell to go to the place where he belongs.'
- 26 Lots were cast; Matthias was elected and so was assigned a place with the eleven Apostles.

THE DAY OF PENTECOST

2 The Day of Pentecost came round, and they all met. Sud-

- * This refers to Judas' death through falling headlong on a farm he had bought with the wages of his sin; his stomach burst open and his bowels gushed out. All Jerusalem heard about this, and the place acquired the name,
- 19 'The Field of Blood', or, in their language, 'Akeldama'.

Chapter Two

denly a sound like the roaring of a strong wind came from 2
heaven and filled the whole house in which they were sitting.
What seemed to be separate tongues of flame appeared and 3
settled upon each of them. They were all filled with the Holy 4
Spirit, and under his inspiration began to speak in languages
they did not know. The noise caused a crowd to gather. Now 5, 6
orthodox Jews from every country under the sun were at the
time visiting Jerusalem, and what amazed them was that each
of them recognized the language the disciples were speaking
as his own. They were completely bewildered, and kept ask- 7
ing, 'What is happening? Don't all these men speaking come
from Galilee? How is it that what each of us hears is his own 8
native language? There are Parthians, Medes, Elamites, 9
people from Mesopotamia, Judaea and Cappadocia, Pontus
and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the country 10
round Cyrene in Libya, visitors from Rome, Jews by birth
and Jews by conversion, Cretans and Arabians – yet we all 11
of us hear them glorifying God in our own language.'

They were mystified and perplexed, and kept asking each 12
other what it meant, though some jeeringly suggested that 13
they had drunk too much new wine. Peter, however, now 14
came forward with the eleven Apostles and addressed them
in a ringing voice: 'Fellow Jews, visitors to Jerusalem, listen
to me and hear the truth. These men are not drunk, as you 15
imagine, for it is only nine in the morning. No; this is what 16
was predicted by the prophet Joel when he said,

"It shall come to pass in the last days," saith God, 17
"That I will pour out my Spirit upon all mankind,
And their sons and daughters shall prophesy, .
And their young men shall see visions
And their old men shall dream dreams.
Yea, and on my servants and on my handmaids in those days 18
Will I pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.
And I will show wonders in the heavens above 19

The Acts of the Apostles

- And signs on the earth below –
Blood and fire and vapour of smoke;
20 'The sun shall be turned into darkness,
The moon shall be turned into blood,
Before the Coming of the Day of the Lord,
The great and glorious day;
21 And it shall come to pass that whoever shall call
On the name of the Lord shall be saved.'*

- 22 Listen to me, men of Israel. Jesus of Nazareth was sent to you by God. This is proved by the mighty works and miracles and wonders, all known to you, which God enabled him to
23 perform among you. It was with God's foreknowledge and according to God's appointed plan that he was betrayed: you
24 had him murdered, nailed up, by those wicked men. But God resurrected him, releasing him from the agony of death;
25 it was not possible for death to master him. For David said of him,

- I saw the Lord always before me,
For he is at my right hand, lest I be overthrown;
26 So my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced.
Moreover my flesh shall dwell in hope,
27 BECAUSE THOU WILT NOT LEAVE MY SOUL IN
THE LAND OF THE DEAD,
NOR ALLOW THY HOLY ONE TO SEE CORRUPTION.
28 Thou hast made known to me the ways of life;
Thou shalt make me full of gladness with thy presence.*

- 29 This I make bold to say to you, brethren: the patriarch David himself DID die, and was buried, and his sepulchre is with us
30, 31 to this day. But David knew that God had made a solemn vow to set one of his descendants on his throne, so when he said he was not left in the Land of the Dead, and his flesh did not see corruption, it was not of himself but of the resurrected
32 Messiah that he was speaking, with prophetic foresight. God

Chapter Two

HAS resurrected Jesus, as we can witness; and Jesus, exalted by 33
God's mighty power, has received from the Father the
promised gift of the Holy Spirit, and has poured forth that
Spirit, in your sight and hearing. It was not David who 34
ascended to heaven; what David said was,

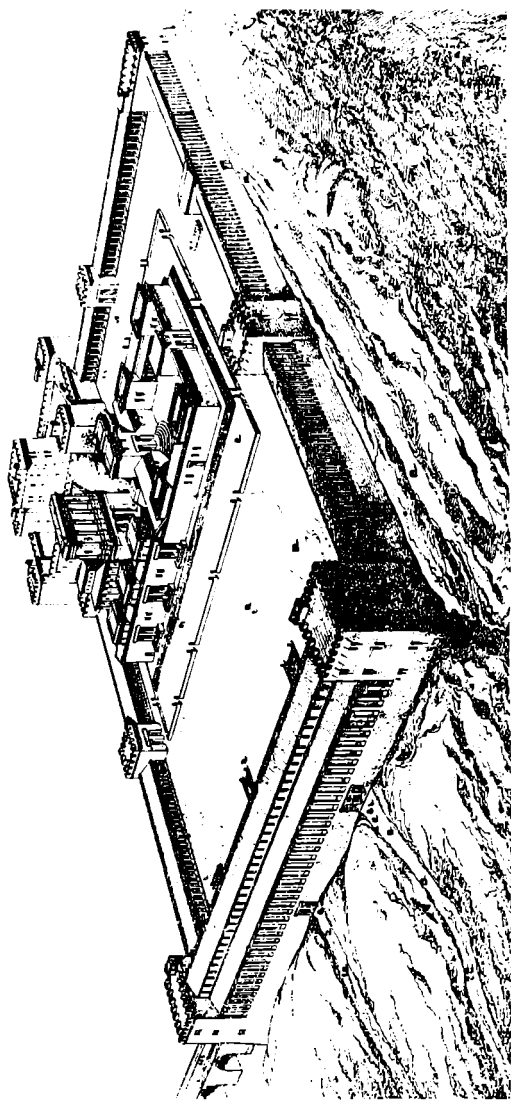
*The Lord God said unto MY LORD, "Sit thou on my right hand,
Till I make thine enemies thy footstool."* 35

The whole house of Israel must recognize beyond doubt that 36
Jesus, whom you crucified, is the Lord and the Messiah ap-
pointed by God.'

These words stung their consciences, and they asked Peter 37
and the Apostles, 'Brethren, what are we to do?'

'Repent,' said Peter, 'and be baptized all of you in the 38
name of Jesus the Messiah. Your sins will then be forgiven,
and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For it was to 39
you that the gift was promised, to you and your children,
and to all those in distant times and places whom the Lord
our God calls to him.'

Peter continued his speech for a long time, and appealed 40
to them repeatedly, 'Save yourselves from this perverted
generation.' Those who accepted what he said were baptized, 41
and at this period about three thousand people joined them.
They devoted themselves in close fellowship to instruction 42
from the Apostles, to regular Breaking of Bread and to
prayer. The Apostles performed many miracles and wonders, 43
and a feeling of awe came over every soul. They lived as a 44
community and shared everything; they sold their property 45
and belongings and distributed the money among them-
selves according to need. Every day they met in the Temple 46
in unity of spirit, broke bread together in each other's houses,
took their food with glad and simple hearts, and gave praise 47
to God. They enjoyed the goodwill of the Jewish people,
and the Lord increased their community daily by new
converts.



HEROD'S TEMPLE FROM THE SOUTH-EAST

Chapter Three

PETER HEALS A LAME BEGGAR

One day Peter and John were going up to the Temple for 3
prayers, at three in the afternoon. At the same time a man 2
who had been a cripple from birth was being carried to his
place at what is called the Beautiful Gate of the Temple,
where he was laid every day to beg alms of those who
entered it. When he saw Peter and John on their way in, he 3
asked them for alms. They fixed their eyes on him, and 4
Peter said, 'Look at us.'

He turned in their direction, expecting to get something 5
from them. But Peter said, 'I have no silver or gold, but 6
what I have I give you: in the name of Jesus Christ of
Nazareth, walk'; and grasping him by the right hand he 7
pulled him to his feet. Immediately his ankles and feet ac-
quired strength, and he sprang up, stood and started to walk. 8
Then he went with them into the Temple, walking, jump-
ing, and praising God. When all the people saw him walking 9
and praising God, and recognized him as the beggar who 10
used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, they were lost
in amazement at what had happened.

He continued to cling to Peter and John, and the people 11
quickly gathered round them in Solomon's Colonnade,
where Peter, seeing his opportunity, addressed them: 'Men 12
of Israel, what is there in this that so astonishes you? Why
are you staring at us as if it was OUR powers or holiness that
enabled him to walk? Jesus is *that Servant who has been* 13
glorified by the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and Jacob, the
God of our fathers though YOU betrayed him and disowned
him before Pilate, after Pilate had decided to acquit him. Yes, 14
you disowned the Holy and Righteous One. You demanded
the release of a murderer, and murdered the Author of Life. 15
But God has resurrected him from the dead, and we are
witnesses to the fact. It is his power, and faith in his power, 16

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that has cured the man you see before you, who is well known to you all. It was the faith that comes from him that
17 has made this man sound of limb, here in front of you all. I know, brethren, that you acted in ignorance, like your
18 rulers, though God did predict the sufferings of his Messiah through the mouth of all the Prophets, and this was the way
19 he fulfilled those predictions. However, if your sins are to be wiped out you must repent and turn to the Lord, so that
20 he may bring in the times of blessedness that will follow the advent of your destined Messiah, Jesus; for until the
21 whole world is re-created, he has to remain in Heaven. The holy Prophets under God's inspiration have pronounced
22 about this event since the beginning of the world. Moses said,

*A prophet shall the Lord God raise from among your
brethren like unto me;*

Hearken to him in whatsoever he shall tell you.

23 *And it shall be that every soul which shall not hearken
to that prophet
Shall be utterly destroyed from among the People.*

24 Yes, and every Prophet who has ever voiced his thoughts,
25 from Samuel onwards, has prophesied that time. You are the heirs of the Prophets. YOU are the heirs of the Covenant which God made with your ancestors when he told Abraham,
“Through a descendant of thine all the families of the earth shall be
26 blessed.” It is for you above all others that God raised his servant and sent him to bless you by turning each of you from his sinful way of life.’

THE ARREST AND RELEASE OF PETER AND JOHN

4 Peter and John's speeches to the people were interrupted by the arrival of the priests, the Commander of the Temple and

Chapter Four

the Sadducees, who were furious with them for teaching the people and for trying to prove the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead by quoting the case of Jesus. They arrested them, and as it was evening took them into custody till the next day. Nevertheless many of those who had heard their message joined the ranks of the believers, bringing their numbers up to about five thousand.

Next day there was a meeting of the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem; the rulers, the elders, the Doctors of the Law, Annas the High Priest, Caiaphas, Jonathan, Alexander and all the Chief Priests were there. They summoned the prisoners into their presence and asked them, 'By what power and on whose authority have you people done this?'

Guided by the Holy Spirit, Peter replied, 'Rulers of the people, Elders, if we are here to be questioned about a good deed to a cripple and about his cure, my answer to you, and to all the people of Israel, is this: It was done in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but God resurrected from the dead. By HIS power this man stands in front of you cured. Jesus is *The stone which, rejected by the builders – you – became the corner-stone*. Salvation is through him alone. In all the world he is the only means men have been given of finding the salvation we look for.'

The Council were dumbfounded at the bold assurance of Peter and John, whom they had taken for illiterate common people, and it came home to them that they had been the companions of Jesus. However, confronted by the sight of the cured man standing at their side they could find nothing to say. So having ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin they deliberated what to do with them. They realized that it was clear to the whole of Jerusalem that they had performed a remarkable miracle, and there was no denying it. But to prevent the news spreading further among the people they decided to caution them severely against speaking to anyone in 'that name' again. So they called them

The Acts of the Apostles

back and warned them on no account to speak or give instruction in the name of Jesus.

19 To this Peter and John replied, 'You must decide whether it is right in the eyes of God for us to listen to God or listen
20 to you. As for us, we cannot STOP speaking of the things we saw and heard.'

21 With a further severe caution the Council then released them, for they could find no pretext for punishing them. Their difficulty was the people, who were all glorifying God
22 for what had happened, for the man on whom the miracle of healing had been performed was more than forty years old.

23 On their release they went to their friends and reported everything the Chief Priests and Elders had said to them.
24 When they heard it they raised their voices to God in unity of spirit: 'Sovran Lord, who made the heaven and the earth
25 and the sea and everything in them, through your Servant David our father, the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit, you said,

*Why did the Gentiles rage,
And the People of Israel make vain schemes?
26 The kings of the earth set themselves in array,
And the rulers were gathered together,
Against the Lord and against his Anointed.*

27 And now in this city, against your holy Servant Jesus whom you anointed, Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles
28 and the people of Israel, HAVE gathered together, to do what
29 your might and your will ordained beforehand. Now, O Lord, observe their threats, and grant that your servants
30 may speak your word undaunted, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and miracles and wonders are performed through the name of your holy Servant Jesus.'

31 When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled shook, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit. They continued to speak the word of God fearlessly.

Chapter Five

THE EARLY COMMUNITY

The community of the faithful were one, heart and soul. 32
None of them considered any of his possessions his own:
they shared all they had. The Apostles gave their witness to 33
the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great force, and a
wealth of grace rested upon them all. None of them went in 34
need, for all those who owned land or houses sold them, and 35
placed the money at the disposal of the Apostles, who distributed to each according to his need. One such gift came 36
from Joseph, a Levite of Cypriot parentage, whom the
Apostles called Barnabas, which means 'Preacher'. He sold 37
a plot of land he owned, and handed the money to the
Apostles.

ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA

A man called Ananias, however, sold some property, and 5
with the connivance of his wife, Sapphira, appropriated 2
some of the money. The remainder he brought to the
Apostles.

'Ananias,' said Peter, 'how is it that you opened your 3
heart to Satan, lied to the Holy Spirit, and kept back part of
the money from your land? When you had the land, was it 4
not yours to keep? When you had sold it, was not the money
yours? What possessed you to do this? It is not men you have
tried to deceive; it is God.'

At these words Ananias fell down dead, while terror struck 5
the hearts of everyone present. The young men rose and 6
wrapped him in a shroud, then carried him out of the city
and buried him.

Three hours later his wife, who had heard nothing about 7
this, came in. Peter said to her, 'Tell me, is this the sum you 8
sold the land for?'

'Yes,' she said. 'That is the sum.'

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9 'Why,' he asked, 'have you and your husband conspired to provoke the Spirit of the Lord? Hark, the footsteps of those who have buried your husband are at the door. They are going to carry YOU out.'

10 Immediately she fell down at his feet and died. The young men came in, found her dead, carried her out of the city and
11 buried her beside her husband. Terror struck all the church and all who heard about it.

THE SECOND ARREST AND RELEASE OF THE APOSTLES

12 A great number of miracles and wonders were performed by the Apostles. The community's meeting-place was now
13 Solomon's Colonnade, where no one ventured to intrude
14 on them; the people held them in high esteem, in fact a large number of men and women joined their ranks as believers
15 in the Lord. As a result of the miracles people even carried the sick out into the streets on beds and stretchers in the hope that as Peter passed his shadow at least might fall on them.
16 Crowds from the cities round about Jerusalem came in, bringing people who were physically or mentally afflicted, and all were cured.

17 The High Priest and his circle – the sect of the Sadducees –
18 prompted by envy, now arrested the Apostles and threw
19 them into the public prison. But at night an Angel of the
20 Lord opened the prison doors and led them out, saying, 'Go, stand in the Temple and tell the people everything about this Way of Life.'

21 With these words in their ears they entered the Temple at daybreak and continued their teaching.

The High Priest and his circle came and summoned the Sanhedrin – the Jewish Senate – and sent to the prison for the
22 prisoners. But the officials who went found that they were
23 not in the prison, and returned with this report: 'We found

Chapter Five

the prison safely locked, with the gaolers on guard at the doors, but on opening it we found no one inside.'

This news alarmed the Commander of the Temple and the High Priest, for they did not know where the matter would end. However, a man now arrived with the information that the men they had put in prison were standing in the Temple teaching the people. The Commander went with the officials and escorted them back, though without force, as they were afraid of being stoned by the people. They led them to the Sanhedrin, where the High Priest questioned them.

'We gave you the strictest instructions', he said, 'not to teach in "this name", yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching. You are trying to bring down vengeance on us for the death of this man.'

'We must obey God rather than men,' Peter and the Apostles replied. 'The God of our fathers raised Jesus: you hung him on a tree and killed him. But the power of God has exalted him to be Prince and Saviour, to give Israel the chance to repent and find forgiveness for their sins. We are witnesses of these events, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.'

The words went through their hearts like a sword, and they wanted to kill them. But a Pharisee called Gamaliel, an authority on the Law, highly respected by the people, rose to his feet in the Sanhedrin, and after ordering the men to be taken outside for a while said, 'Be very careful, men of Israel, what you do with these men. Some time ago there was a rising led by a man called Theudas, who claimed to be somebody and attracted about four hundred followers, yet after he had been killed all of them dispersed and faded away. After him, at the time of the census, there was the rising of Judas of Galilee, who led the people in a revolt. But he too was crushed, and all of his followers were cattered. So in this case my advice is: Do not touch

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these men. Let them go, or you may find yourselves in conflict with God. For if the design and execution of this plan are man's, it will fail; if God's, you will not be able to thwart it.'

- 40 His words convinced them, and they summoned the
Apostles back. They beat them, gave them strict injunctions
41 not to speak of Jesus, and then set them free. They left the
Sanhedrin overjoyed at the honour of suffering dishonour
42 for the Name; and undeterred, every day, in the Temple
and in their homes, went on teaching and preaching the
gospel of Jesus, the Messiah.

THE ELECTION OF THE SEVEN

- 6 Not long after this, with the ever-increasing number of
disciples, complaints arose among the Hellenistic Jews
against the native Jews that the widows of their group were
being unfairly treated in the daily distribution of alms. The
2 Twelve called a meeting of the community of disciples and
addressed them: 'Brothers, the twelve of us have been so
occupied with the distribution of alms that we have neg-
lected the preaching of the word of God, and this is not
3 right. You must choose from among you seven trustworthy,
intelligent, and spiritually-minded men, and we will hand
4 over the task to them. This will leave us free to devote our-
selves to conducting prayer and preaching the gospel.'
- 5 The proposal was accepted by all the members of the
community. They chose Stephen, a man of firm faith and
graced by the Holy Spirit; Philip; Prochorus; Nicanor;
Timon; Parmenas; and Nicolas, a Jewish proselyte from
6 Antioch. They led them up to the Apostles, who after a
prayer performed the laying-on of hands.
- 7 The Word of God spread, and the number of disciples in
Jerusalem increased greatly. A large number of priests em-
braced the faith.

Chapter Seven

THE TRIAL AND MARTYRDOM OF STEPHEN

Stephen, full of grace and power, began to perform great 8
miracles and wonders among the people. But opposition 9
arose from some members of the Synagogue of Roman
Freedmen – men from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and
Asia. They started a controversy with Stephen, but in intel- 10
ligence they were no match for him or for the Spirit behind
him. They then paid some men to say that they had heard 11
Stephen blaspheming against Moses and God. Having in this 12
way stirred up the people, the Elders, and Doctors of Law to
an angry mood, they came and arrested Stephen, and took
him before the Sanhedrin. Here they produced their false 13
witnesses, who said, ‘This man is always attacking the
Temple and the Law. We have heard him say that the 14
person Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this holy place and
change the customs which Moses gave us.’

Everyone in the Council-chamber gazed at Stephen, and 15
saw that his face was like an angel’s.

The High Priest asked, ‘Is this true?’

‘Brethren, fathers,’ Stephen answered, ‘listen. *The God of* 2
glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Meso-
potamia, before he settled in Haran, and said to him, 3

*“Leave thy country and thy kindred,
And go unto the country that I shall show thee.”*

So Abraham left the country of the Chaldaeans and settled 4
in Haran, from where, after his father’s death, God made
him move to this country of Canaan you now live in. He 5
did not allow him, however, to own *so much as a foot of it*,
though he promised him, when he was still childless, that he
would eventually give it to him, *and to his descendants after*
him, as a permanent possession. God’s words were that his 6

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descendants would stay in a foreign land, and the inhabitants would reduce them to slavery and persecute them for four hundred years.

- 7 “*And I will pass sentence on the nation which enslaves them,*”
said God,
“*And then they shall leave that country and serve me in this.*”

- 8 God gave Abraham *the covenant of the circumcision*; so when Abraham had a son, Isaac, he circumcised him seven days after his birth. Isaac had a son Jacob, and Jacob's sons were
9 the founders of the Twelve Tribes. They were jealous of Joseph, and *sold him into Egypt*. God *was with him*, however,
10 and rescued him from his distress, for with God's help and his own wisdom he won the confidence of Pharaoh, the King of Egypt. Pharaoh made him governor of Egypt and
11 controller of his household. Then a famine struck the whole of Egypt and Canaan, causing great distress, and our fore-
12 fathers could find no food. But when Jacob heard that *there*
13 *was corn in Egypt* he sent our forefathers there. On their second visit Joseph *revealed himself to his brothers*, and Pharaoh
14 learnt about Joseph's family. Joseph sent for his father Jacob and all his family, who numbered *threescore and fifteen souls*.
15 So Jacob went down into Egypt, where he and our fore-
16 fathers died. Their bodies were removed to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham had bought for a sum of silver coins from the sons of Hamor.
17 ‘When the time approached for the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham, the people of Israel *grew and multiplied*
18 *in Egypt, till there arose another king over Egypt who knew not*
19 *Joseph*. He exploited our race, and persecuted our forefathers by forcing them to leave their babies out in the open to die of exposure.
20 ‘At this time Moses was born, a beautiful child. He was
21 nursed for three months in his father's house, then exposed to die. But Pharaoh's daughter found him and brought

Chapter Seven

him up as her own son. He learnt all the wisdom of Egypt, 22
and was a vigorous man, and forceful in his speech.

‘When he was nearly forty years old he resolved to visit 23
his kindred, the children of Israel, and seeing one of them 24
attacked by an Egyptian he went to his assistance, and in
rescuing him killed the attacker. He imagined that his 25
kindred would understand that God was sending him to save
them; but they did not. The next day he found two of his 26
kindred fighting, and tried to reconcile them.

“You belong to the same race,” he said. “Why do you
fight each other?”

‘The one who was responsible pushed Moses aside with 27
the words,

“Who made THEE a ruler and judge over us?
Intendest thou to kill me 28
As thou killedst the Egyptian yesterday?”

At these words Moses fled. He settled in Midian, where two 29
sons were born to him.

‘At the end of forty years, an angel appeared to him in the 30
desert of Mount Sinai, in a bush, in a flame of fire. Moses was 31
amazed at the sight, and as he approached to examine it there
came the voice of the Lord,

“I am the God of thy fathers, 32
The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.”

Moses trembled and was afraid to look. And the Lord said to 33
him,

“Put off thy shoes from thy feet,
For the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.
I have indeed seen the affliction of my people who 34
are in Egypt,
And have heard their sighs,
And am come down to save them.
So come, and I will send thee into Egypt.”

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35 This is the Moses whom they pushed aside with the words,
“ *Who made THEE a ruler and judge?*” but whom God, by the
agency of the angel who appeared to him in the bush, sent
36 to be a ruler and a saviour too. This is the man who led them
to safety, after performing *signs and wonders in the land of*
Egypt and at the Red Sea, and again *in the wilderness for forty*
37 *years*. This is the Moses who told the children of Israel,

“ *A prophet shall God raise for you from among your brethren*
LIKE UNTO ME.”

38 This is the man who was in the assembly in the desert,
mediating between the angel who spoke to him on Mount
Sinai and our forefathers, and who received the Law of Life
39 to hand on to us. But our forefathers rejected his teaching and
40 refused to listen to him. They hankered after Egypt, and
said to Aaron,

“ *Make images to be carried in front of us,*
For as for this Moses who brought us up
from the land of Egypt,
We know not what has become of him.”

41 They made an image of a calf and, pleased with the idol they
42 had made, offered up a sacrifice to it. But God turned his
back on them, and left them *to the worship of the stars of the*
sky. The Book of the Prophets says,

“ *Have you offered slain beasts and sacrifices unto me*
For forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?
43 *Yea, but ye also carried the tabernacle of Moloch,*
And the star of the god Rephan –
The images which ye made to worship.
And I will exile you beyond Babylon.”

44 ‘It was in the desert that our forefathers received *the*
tabernacle of the testimony, made by Moses according to the
design he had seen in his vision and on the instruction of
45 Him who had then spoken with him. Our forefathers in

Chapter Seven

herited this tabernacle, and carried it with them. They had it when, under Joshua, they occupied the territory of the races driven out by God, and they kept it till the time of David. David, whom God loved, asked permission to *find an abode* 46 *for the God of Jacob*, yet it was Solomon who built him a 47 temple. But the Most High does not need a home built by 48 man. As the Prophet said,

"The heaven is MY throne, 49
And the earth the footstool of my feet;
What manner of house will YE build me?"

saith the Lord;
"Or what is my place of rest?
Did not my hands make all these things?" 50

'O you stubborn people, hard of heart and hard of hear- 51
ing, all along you fight against the Holy Spirit, just like
your forefathers. Which of the prophets escaped persecution 52
from your forefathers? THEY killed those who foretold the
coming of the Righteous One; YOU have now betrayed and
murdered him. You received the Law at the hands of 53
angels; you have not kept it.'

His words went through their hearts like a sword, and they 54
gnashed their teeth in fury. But filled with the Holy Spirit he 55
gazed up to heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus
standing on the right hand of God.

'Look!' he cried. 'I see heaven open, and the Son of Man 56
standing on the right hand of God.'

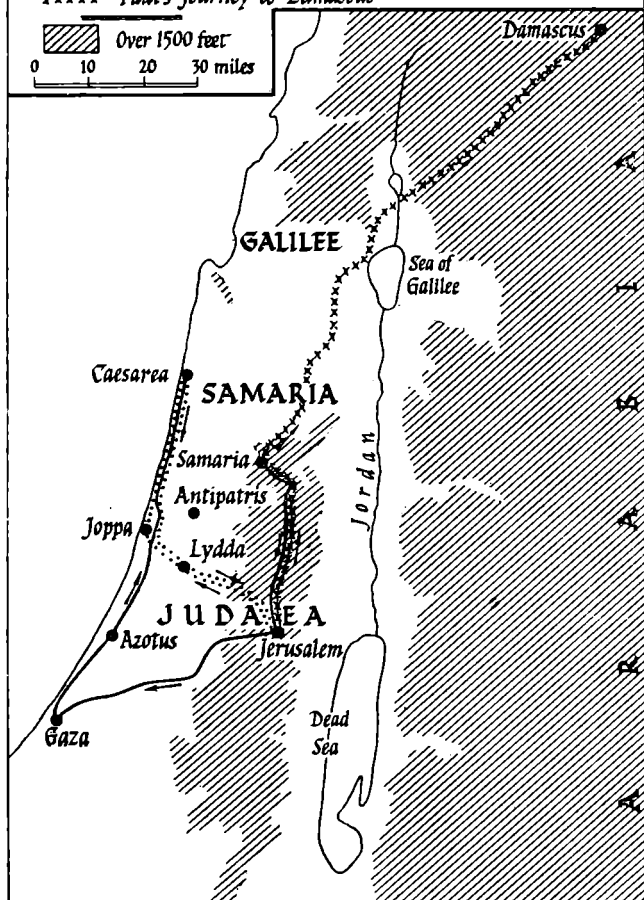
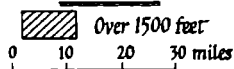
They gave a great shout and stopped their ears, then hurled 57
themselves on him in a body. They dragged him out of the 58
city and got ready to stone him, and the witnesses laid the
clothes they took off at the feet of a young man called Saul.
As they were stoning Stephen he called on the Lord with the 59
words, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he knelt down, 60
and cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not punish them
for this sin.'

EARLY MISSIONARY JOURNEYS

— The Mission of Philip the Evangelist

..... The Mission of Peter

xxxxx Paul's Journey to Damascus



Chapter Eight

Saying this he died and was at peace.

Among those who approved of the killing of Stephen was 8
Saul.

PHILIP SPREADS THE GOSPEL IN SAMARIA

On that very day a great persecution of the church in Jerusalem began. All except the Apostles fled to different parts of Judaea and Samaria. Stephen was buried by some devout 2
men with full ceremonial lamentation. Saul proceeded to 3
ravage the church, going into their homes and dragging people off, even women, and throwing them into prison.

Meanwhile the disciples who had fled preached the gospel 4
wherever they went. Philip travelled down to a city in 5
Samaria, and there began proclaiming the Messiah. The 6
crowds were deeply impressed by his message as they listened to his speeches and saw the miracles he performed. He cured many madmen, whose devils quit them with loud 7
screams, and healed many paralytics and cripples, to the 8
great joy of the citizens.

In the city there was a man called Simon, who practised 9
magic. He made extravagant claims for himself and had made a great impression on the people. All classes flocked 10
to him, convinced that he was 'The Mighty One of God'. They had been under the spell of his magic for so long that 11
they were confirmed followers of his. However, they were 12
now converted by Philip's preaching of the gospel of the kingdom of God and of the Name of Jesus Christ, and many men and women were baptized. Even Simon was converted 13
and baptized, and became a devoted follower of Philip; he was fascinated by the sight of the great wonders and miracles he performed.

PETER AND THE MAGICIAN

When the news reached the Apostles in Jerusalem that 14

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Samaria had accepted the gospel of God they sent Peter and
15 John there. On their arrival they prayed that the people
16 should receive the Holy Spirit, for as yet he had not descended on any of them: they had only been baptized in the
17 name of the Lord Jesus. The Apostles then laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

18 When Simon saw that the Holy Spirit was given through the laying-on of the Apostles' hands he offered them money,
19 saying, 'Give me this power as well, so that everyone I lay my hands on may receive the Holy Spirit.'

20 'Perdition take you and your money,' said Peter, 'for
21 thinking that you could buy the gift of God! These matters are beyond your grasp. You cannot see things in their true
22 light. Repent of your sin, and say your prayers to the Lord in the hope that you may be forgiven for your wicked
23 scheme. It shows how sunk and degraded you are.'

24 'Will you say your prayers to the Lord for me,' Simon pleaded. 'Pray that nothing of what you have said may happen to me.'

25 After giving their witness and teaching the word of the Lord, they all returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages on the way.

PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH

26 Then an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip. 'Go and travel south,' he said, 'along the road from Jerusalem down to Gaza-in-the-Desert.'

27 So Philip set out. Now an Ethiopian eunuch, a minister of Candace, the Queen of Ethiopia, and steward of her
28 treasury, who had come to Jerusalem on a pilgrimage, was on his way home. He was in his carriage, reading aloud from
29 the Prophet Isaiah. The Spirit said to Philip, 'Go and join him in his carriage.' So Philip caught him up, and when he
30 heard him reading the Prophet Isaiah he asked, 'Are you

Chapter Nine

really taking in what you are reading out?’

‘How can I take it in, unless someone explains it to me?’ 31
he replied, and asked Philip to come up and sit with him.

The passage in the Scriptures that he was reading was this: 32

*He was led as a sheep to the slaughter.
And, as a lamb before its shearers is dumb,
So he openeth not his mouth.*

*Here he was humbled, but the judgement on him was reversed, 33
For he is raised to a life above the land of the living,
And who will be able to calculate the number of his followers?*

The eunuch said to Philip, ‘Please tell me whom the 34
prophet is talking about here? Is it himself or someone else?’

So, beginning from this passage, Philip explained the 35
gospel of Jesus to him.

As they went on their way they came to some water. 36

‘Look, water!’ said the eunuch. ‘Is there any reason why I
should not be baptized?’

He gave orders for the carriage to stop. Philip and he 38
both climbed down and went into the water, where Philip
baptized him. When they came out Philip was led away by 39
the Spirit of the Lord. That was the last the eunuch saw of
him, but he went on his way with a joyful heart. Philip was 40
next heard of in Azotus, and from thence he set out on a mis-
sionary journey through all the cities, ending up in Caesarea.

THE CONVERSION OF SAUL

Saul meanwhile, still with threats on his lips and murder in 9
his heart for the disciples of the Lord, approached the High
Priest with a request for letters to the synagogues in Damas- 2
cus empowering him to arrest and bring back to Jerusalem
any men or women of the Way he might find there. On the 3
journey, when he was approaching Damascus, a light from

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- 4 heaven suddenly flashed around him. He fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him,
 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?'
- 5 'Who are you, sir?' he asked.
- 6 'I am Jesus. It is I whom you are persecuting. But get up and go into the city, and you will be told what to do.'
- 7 Saul's travelling companions stood speechless, for they
8 heard Saul speaking but could see no one else. Saul rose from the ground, but though his eyes were now open he could not see, so they led him by the hand, and brought him to
9 Damascus. For three days he was blind, and ate and drank nothing.
- 10 At Damascus there was a disciple called Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, 'Ananias.'
 'Yes, Lord, I am here,' he answered.
- 11 The Lord said to him, 'Go to Straight Street and inquire at the house of Judas for a man called Saul, from Tarsus. He
12 is saying his prayers, and has had a vision of a man called Ananias coming in and laying on his hands to restore his sight.'
- 13 'But, Lord,' Ananias answered, 'many people have told me that this man has done a lot of harm to your followers in
14 Jerusalem, and here in Damascus he has authority to arrest anyone who worships you.'
- 15 'Go all the same,' the Lord said, 'because he is the man I have chosen to carry my name to the Gentiles, to kings, and
16 to the children of Israel, and he must learn what he will have to suffer for my sake.'
- 17 So Ananias went to the house and laid his hands on Saul, saying, 'Saul, brother, I have been sent by the Lord—the Jesus who appeared to you on your journey here. He has sent me to help you regain your sight and receive the Holy Spirit.'
- 18 Immediately the scales fell from Saul's eyes and he could
19 see. He rose and was baptized, and after he had had a meal he recovered his strength.

Chapter Nine

SAUL IN DAMASCUS AND JERUSALEM

Saul later stayed some time with the disciples in Damascus. Without delay he began to proclaim the gospel in the 20
synagogues, and his message was, 'Jesus is the Son of God.'
Everyone who heard him was amazed. 'Isn't he the man,' 21
they asked, 'who caused such havoc among the worshippers
of "this name" in Jerusalem, and wasn't the sole reason for
his coming to Damascus to arrest them and take them back
to the Chief Priests?'

Saul's power, however, went on increasing, and he non- 22
plussed the Jews of Damascus by proving from the Scrip-
tures that Jesus was the Messiah.

After some time the Jews made a plot to kill Saul, but he 23, 24
heard about it. They were keeping a watch night and day at
the city gates to catch and kill him, but his disciples took him 25
by night and let him down in a basket through an opening
in the wall.

On his arrival in Jerusalem he tried to join the disciples, 26
but they were all afraid of him, not believing that his con-
version was genuine. However, Barnabas took him to the 27
Apostles and told them how Saul had seen the Lord on his
journey and what the Lord had said to him, and he described
how courageously Saul had preached in the name of Jesus in
Damascus. So Saul became one of their company in Jeru- 28
salem, and preached fearlessly in the name of the Lord. He 29
also began to engage in discussion and controversy with the
Hellenist Jews, but they plotted to kill him. However, the 30
Brotherhood found out about this and escorted him down
to Caesarea, from where they sent him to Tarsus.

PETER AT LYDDA AND JOPPA

Meanwhile the Church throughout Judaea, Galilee, and 31
Samaria enjoyed a period of peace, and increased steadily in

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strength and in numbers, its members living in the fear of the Lord and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

32 In the course of a missionary journey through the whole
33 region Peter visited the Brotherhood at Lydda, where he
found a man called Aeneas, who had been confined to his
34 bed for eight years with paralysis. Peter said to him, 'Aeneas,
Jesus Christ brings you health. Get up and have something
to eat.'

35 Aeneas rose immediately. Many people in Lydda and
Sharon saw him and were converted to the Lord.

36 In Joppa there was a disciple called Tabitha, the Greek for
which is Dorcas. She was a woman devoted to good works
37 and almsgiving. It so happened that at this time she fell ill
and died. They washed her and laid her out in an upstairs
38 room. Now Lydda is near Joppa, and when the disciples
heard that Peter was there they sent two men to him with an
39 urgent request to come. Peter set out with them, and on his
arrival was taken to the upstairs room, where all the widows
gathered round him in tears, showing him the cloaks and
tunics that Dorcas had made for them when she was alive.
40 Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed. Then
turning to the body he said, 'Tabitha, get up.' She opened
41 her eyes and, seeing Peter, sat up. He gave her his hand and
raised her to her feet, and then calling in the widows and
other members of the Brotherhood handed her to them safe
42 and sound. The news of this spread all through Joppa, and
many people were converted to the Lord.

43 Peter spent a long time in Joppa, staying with a tanner
called Simon.

PETER BAPTIZES CORNELIUS

10 In Caesarea there was a centurion of the Italian Cohort
2 called Cornelius, who like all his household was a pious
observer of Jewish religious customs. He was generous in

Chapter Ten

giving alms to the people of Israel and regular in his prayers. At about three one afternoon he had a vision in which he 3 clearly saw an angel of God, who came into his house and said, 'Cornelius.'

He gazed at him in fear, and said, 'What is it, sir?' 4

'Your prayers and acts of charity,' the Angel replied, 'have been observed and remembered by God. You must send to 5 Joppa and ask a man called Simon Peter, who is staying with 6 Simon the tanner in his house by the sea, to come to you.'

The Angel then left, and Cornelius called two of his 7 servants and one of his orderlies, a religious man. He told 8 them what had happened and sent them to Joppa.

Next day they set out and by noon were approaching 9 Joppa when Peter went up on to the roof to pray. He began 10 to feel hungry, and his mind turned to food. While the meal was being prepared he fell into a trance. He saw the sky open, 11 and an object like a large cloth coming down on to the earth, lowered by the four corners. In it was every kind of 12 animal, reptile, and bird. Then he heard a voice saying, 13 'Peter, get up. Kill and eat.'

'No, Lord,' Peter answered. 'I have never eaten anything 14 impure or untouchable.'

Again the voice came to him: 'Do not call untouchable 15 what God has declared pure.'

This happened three times, and then the object was taken 16 up into the sky, and Peter was left wondering what the 17 vision meant. Meanwhile the men sent by Cornelius, who had asked their way to Simon's house, had reached the door, and they called out asking if Simon Peter was staying there. 18 Peter was still pondering about the vision when the Spirit 19 spoke to him again.

'Three men are asking for you. Go down and accompany 20 them without any hesitation, for they were sent by me.'

Peter went down to the men and said, 'I am the man you 21 are looking for. What brings you here?'

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- 22 They replied, 'We have been sent by the centurion Cornelius. He is a good man, a devout observer of Jewish religious customs and highly respected by all the Jews. He has been instructed by a holy angel to ask you to his house and hear what you have to say.'
- 23 Peter then asked them in and invited them to stay. The next day he set out with them, accompanied by some of the
- 24 Brotherhood of Joppa, and on the following day they arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them, and had invited
- 25 his relatives and close friends. When Peter entered the city Cornelius went to meet him, and fell at his feet in homage.
- 26 Peter, however, lifted him up saying, 'Stand up. I'm a man
- 27 too.' Then talking together they went in to his house, where Peter found a large gathering.
- 28 'You know,' he began, 'that a Jew is forbidden to associate with Gentiles or go into their houses. But God has shown me that I must call no man impure or untouchable,
- 29 so I came without question on being asked. Will you tell me, please, why you have sent for me?'
- 30 'Three days ago,' Cornelius replied, 'I was at home saying my afternoon prayers, which lasted till this time of day, when
- 31 a man in shining white clothes stood in front of me and said, "Cornelius, your prayers have been heard, and your acts of
- 32 charity are remembered in Heaven. Send to Joppa and ask Simon Peter, who is staying in the house of Simon the tanner
- 33 by the sea, to come to you." I sent to you immediately, and you were kind enough to come. We have met here in the sight of God, to hear what God has commanded you to say.'
- 34 Peter answered, 'I am coming to recognize the truth
- 35 of the saying, "*God has no favourites*". He accepts any man who reveres him and leads a good life, whatever his
- 36 nationality. God has sent his Word to the children of Israel. His message was Peace, and his messenger was Jesus Christ,
- 37 who is the Lord of all. You have heard the story of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, first in Galilee after the baptism pro-

Chapter Eleven

claimed by John, and then in the rest of Judaea – how God 38
anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and
how he went about doing good and healing everyone in the
devil's clutches, for God was with him. We can vouch for 39
everything he did in the country of the Jews and Jerusalem.
In the end they *hung him on a tree* and killed him. Yet God 40
resurrected him after two days, and permitted him to be
seen, not by all the Jews but just by us – God's specially 41
chosen eye-witnesses: we ate and drank with him after he
had risen from the dead. He commissioned us to proclaim 42
with our personal witness that he was the man ordained by
God to be the Judge of the living and the dead. All the 43
Prophets agree in their testimony that through his name
EVERYONE who believes in him shall receive forgiveness for
their sins.'

While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit descended 44
on them all as they heard the Word behind his words. The 45, 46
Jewish members of the Brotherhood who had come with
Peter heard them talking in ecstasy and praising God, and
were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit should be
bestowed on Gentiles as well.

'Can anyone see,' Peter asked, 'why these men, who have 47
received the Holy Spirit as we did, should not be baptized
with water?' He then gave instructions for them to be 48
baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. After this they asked
him to stay for several days.

PETER UNDER ATTACK

The news that the Gentiles also had received the Word of 11
God came to the ears of the Apostles and the Brotherhood in
Judaea, and when Peter went up to Jerusalem the stricter 2
Jews attacked him, demanding to know why he had entered 3
the home of uncircumcised men and eaten with them. Peter 4
told them the story from the beginning:

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- 5 'I was in the city of Joppa praying when I fell into a trance,
and in a vision saw an object like a large cloth coming down
from the sky, lowered by its four corners. It came right down
6 to me. As I contemplated it I could see in it tame creatures,
7 wild animals, reptiles, and birds. I heard a voice saying to me,
8 "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." "No, Lord," I said. "Nothing
9 impure or untouchable has ever passed my lips." But again
the voice came from heaven, replying, "Do not call un-
10 touchable what God has declared pure." This happened
three times, and then everything was lifted up again into
11 the sky. At that very moment three men who had been sent
12 to me from Caesarea reached the house where we were. The
Spirit instructed me to go with them, regardless of their
nationality. So I went, accompanied by these six brothers
13 here, and entered the man's house. He explained how he had
seen the angel standing in his house, saying, "Send to Joppa
14 and fetch Simon Peter. He has something to tell you that will
15 bring salvation to you and your household." While I was
speaking the Holy Spirit descended on them as he did
16 originally on us, and I remembered what the Lord told us,
"John baptized with water, but you shall baptize with the
17 Holy Spirit." So if God rewarded their belief in the Lord
Jesus Christ with the same gift as he rewarded ours, who was
I to try to stand in God's way?'
18 Peter's explanation silenced them. They realized that it
was God's doing, and said, 'So God has granted the Gentiles
as well as us the change of heart that leads to Life.'

THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH

- 19 To return to the disciples who had fled as a result of the
oppression that followed on Stephen's death—they travelled
as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the
20 gospel, but only to the Jews. Some of them, however, men
of Cyprus and Cyrene, on reaching Antioch did preach to

Chapter Twelve

the Greeks as well, telling them the good news of the Lord Jesus. The Lord's blessing was on them, and a large number of people were converted to belief in him. However, the news of this activity reached the church in Jerusalem, and Barnabás, an honourable and deeply religious man, full of the Holy Spirit, was sent to Antioch. He arrived, and was overjoyed to discover that the grace of God was at work, and urged them to find unity in their common loyalty to the Lord. Many other people were converted to the faith. Barnabas then went to Tarsus to find Saul, and when he had found him brought him back to Antioch. Here they stayed for a whole year, joining in the worship of the Church and teaching large numbers of people. It was at Antioch that the disciples were first called 'Christians'.

About this time some prophets came down to Antioch from Jerusalem. One of them, Agabus, inspired by the Spirit, predicted that there would be widespread famine over the whole Roman Empire. The disciples, contributing in proportion to their means, made arrangements to send relief to the Brotherhood in Judaea. When later the famine came, in the reign of Claudius, they did so, sending it to the presbyters by Barnabas and Saul.

THE IMPRISONMENT AND ESCAPE OF PETER

About the same time King Herod started persecuting some of the members of the Church. He had John's brother James beheaded, and finding this pleased the Jews he next had Peter arrested and put in prison under the charge of a guard of four sections, each consisting of four soldiers. It was the time of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, and Herod intended to wait till after the Passover and then bring him to trial in front of the people. So Peter was kept in prison, while the Church fervently prayed to God for his safety.

On the night before his trial Peter, handcuffed by two

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chains, was asleep between two soldiers, while the others
7 kept guard outside the door. Suddenly an angel of the Lord
was standing there, and a light shone in the cell. The angel
woke Peter with a touch on the side, and said, 'Get up
quickly.'

8 The chains fell from Peter's wrists. 'Put on your girdle and
sandals,' said the angel. Peter did so.

'Now put on your cloak, and follow me,' said the angel.

9 Peter followed him out. All this time he thought he was
dreaming; he did not know that an angel really was there,
10 helping him. They passed the first guard, then the second,
and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for
them of its own accord and they passed through. They went
11 along one street, then the angel suddenly left him. Peter
came to himself, and said, 'Now I know what happened.
The Lord sent his angel to rescue me from Herod's clutches
and thwart the Jews.'

12 By the time he had realized this he had reached the house
of Mary, John Mark's mother, where a group of people had
13 met and were praying. He gave a knock on the courtyard
14 gate, and a maid called Rose came to answer it. When she
recognized Peter's voice she was so overjoyed that without
opening the gate she ran in and told them that Peter was
there.

15 'You're mad,' they said to her, but when she insisted that
it was so they said, 'It must be his angel.'

16 Peter went on knocking, so they opened the gate, and
17 when they saw him they were overcome with joy. Motion-
ing them to be silent Peter told them how the Lord had
rescued him from prison. 'Tell James and the Brotherhood
about this,' he ended, and left them and went to another
place.

18 As soon as it was day there was great alarm among the
19 soldiers as to what had become of Peter. Herod instituted a
search for him, and when this failed he had the guard tried

Chapter Thirteen

and executed. He then left Judaea for Caesarea, where he remained.

THE DEATH OF HEROD

Now Herod was in a great rage with the people of Tyre and Sidon. They sent a joint embassy to him, and having first secured the goodwill of his chamberlain, Blastus, sued for peace, for their country depended on Herod's for its food supply. On the appointed day Herod arrayed himself in royal robes, took his seat on the throne, and addressed them publicly. The populace shouted out, 'It's a god's voice, not a man's.' At that very moment an angel of the Lord struck him down, for failing to render due honour to God. He was attacked by a violent internal disease and died.

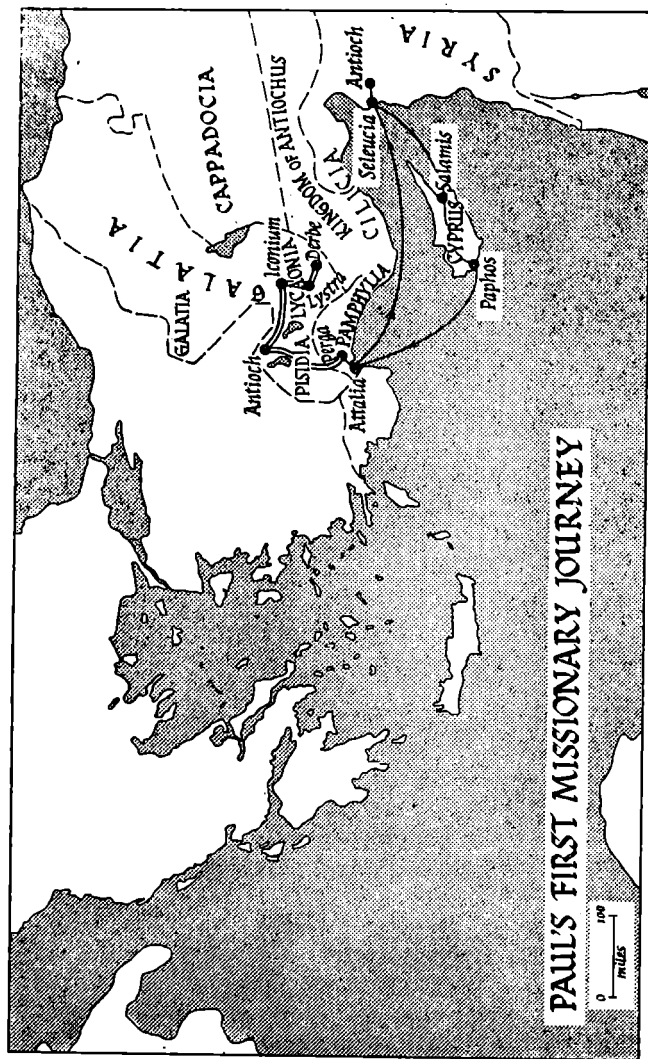
The Word of God spread far and wide. Barnabas and Saul, having completed their relief mission, returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, who now adopted the surname Mark.

BARNABAS AND PAUL ENCOUNTER

A MAGICIAN IN CYPRUS

The prophets and teachers in the Church at Antioch were Barnabas; Simcon Niger; Lucius of Cyrene; Manaen, the childhood companion of Herod the Tetrarch; and Saul. One day, a day of fasting, while they were officiating at the Lord's service, the Holy Spirit spoke: 'It is my wish that you should release Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' So at the end of the fast, after praying and laying their hands on them, they bade them farewell.

The two men, missionaries of the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia, and from there set sail for Cyprus. On arriving at Salamis, with John Mark as their assistant, they started preaching the Word of God in the Jewish synagogues.



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travelled all over the island and came at last to Paphos. Here they found a Jewish magician called Bar-Jesus, who posed as a prophet, and was attached to the household of the pro- 7
consul, Sergius Paulus, a cultivated and intelligent man. Sergius summoned Barnabas and Saul and asked to be told about the Word of God. Elymas, the magician – for that is 8
what his name means – began to argue with them, as he was anxious to stop the proconsul from being converted. Paul, 9
hitherto known as Saul, prompted by the Holy Spirit, fixed him with his eye and said, 10

‘You crafty villain, you son of Satan, you enemy of all that’s good, must you always be twisting *the straight ways of the Lord*? Look, the hand of the Lord is raised against you, and for 11
a time you will be blind, and cut off from the light of day.’

Immediately mist and darkness fell on Elymas, and he groped about trying to find someone to lead him by the hand. The proconsul was convinced when he witnessed this 12
scene, and was much impressed by the doctrine of the Lord.

PAUL PREACHES IN PISIDIAN ANTIOCH

Paul and his company now set sail from Paphos and reached 13
Perga in Pamphylia. John Mark, however, here left them and returned to Jerusalem. Leaving Perga, they continued 14
their journey till they reached Pisidian Antioch, where they went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down. After the readings from the Law and the Prophets, the 15
Leaders of the synagogue sent this message to them: ‘Brethren, if you wish to address the congregation you may do so.’ Paul came forward and motioned for silence. 16

‘Israelites and Gentiles of the synagogue,’ he began, ‘listen to me. The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, made 17
them a great nation while they were in Egypt, and *led them out of Egypt with his mighty hand*. For about forty years he 18
patiently endured their ways in the wilderness, and after about

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"I will give you the holy and sure mercies promised to David;"

which is confirmed in another Psalm, 35

Thou wilt not allow Thy Holy One to suffer decay.

Now it was part of God's plan that David, after a life of 36
service to his generation, should *fall asleep* and be buried *with*
his fathers, and that his body should decay. But the Man 37
whom God resurrected did NOT undergo decay. So you must 38
understand, brethren, that it is through this man that you are
offered forgiveness for your sins. You could never be found 39
innocent if judged by the Law of Moses. But by belief in
Jesus everyone can find innocence. Take care, then, that the 40
doom pronounced in the Prophets does not fall on you:

"Behold, you scoffers, wonder and die; 41
For I will perform a work in your lifetime
Which you would not believe even if it were
described in full."

As Paul and his company were leaving the building they 42
were invited to give another address on the following Sab-
bath. After the congregation had dispersed many Jews and 43
Gentile proselytes of the synagogue accompanied Paul and
Barnabas, who had many discussions with them and urged
them to wait upon the grace of God.

PAUL TURNS TO THE GENTILES

The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear 44
the Word of God. When the Jews saw the crowds they were 45
filled with jealousy and began to attack Paul's arguments
and make blasphemous statements.

Paul and Barnabas answered them fearlessly. 'The Word 46
of God,' they said, 'had to be preached to you before any-
one else, but since you reject it and so judge yourselves

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19 four hundred and forty years he *destroyed seven nations in the*
20 *land of Canaan and handed them their land.* After this he gave
21 them Judges, up till the time of the prophet Samuel, when
they asked for a king. God let them have Saul, the son of
22 Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, but after forty years he re-
moved him, and brought David forward to be their king,
sponsoring him with these words: "*I have found David, the*
son of Jesse, a man after my own heart, who will carry out all my
23 *wishes.*" It was a descendant of David's, Jesus, whom God in
accordance with his promise brought as Saviour to Israel.
24 Before his coming John had proclaimed to the Israelites the
25 baptism of repentance, and when his task was nearing com-
pletion he used to say, "What do you suppose I am? I am
not HE. Behold, after me a man will come whose sandals I
am not worthy to undo.'

26 'Brethren, children of Abraham's line and Gentiles of the
27 synagogue, this message of salvation was sent to us. For the
people of Jerusalem and their leaders failed to recognize
Jesus or to understand the predictions of the prophets –
though they are read aloud Sabbath after Sabbath – but ful-
28 filled THEM by condemning HIM. They asked Pilate to put
him to death though they had not found him guilty of any-
29 thing to deserve it. When they had done all that the Scrip-
tures had predicted they would do, they took him down
30 from the cross and laid him in a tomb. But God resurrected
31 him from the dead, and for many days he was seen by the
men who had accompanied him to Jerusalem from Galilee.
32 They are now his witnesses to the Jews, and we are here to
33 bring you this good news: the promise God made to our fore-
fathers has now been carried out for us and our children. He
has given us Jesus, as the second Psalm describes,

"Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee."

34 God speaks of his resurrection of Jesus and rescuing him
from death's decay in this way:

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47 unworthy of eternal life, look, we turn to the Gentiles. That is what the Lord commanded us to do –

*“I have made you a light for the Gentiles,
That you might bring salvation unto the ends
of the world.”*

48 The Gentiles were overjoyed when they heard this, and gave thanks to God for his Word. All whose destiny was eternal life were converted.

49, 50 The Word of the Lord spread all through the region. The Jews, however, stirred up the opposition of the city authorities and the influential women attached to the synagogue, and had Paul and Barnabas persecuted and driven from the
51 district. So they shook the dust of the place from their feet
52 and went on to Iconium. Their converts, however, continued in joy and the grace of the Holy Spirit.

PAUL AND BARNABAS IN GALATIA

14 In Iconium as in Antioch Paul and Barnabas went into the Jewish synagogue, and converted a large number of Jews
2 and Greeks by their preaching. The unconvinced Jews, however, succeeded in poisoning the minds of the Gentiles and
3 stirring up animosity against the Brotherhood. Nevertheless they stayed there for a long time and, confident in the Lord, taught the gospel of his grace, and he proved the truth of their words by the miracles and wonders he enabled them to
4 perform. But now a split occurred among the citizens, some
5 supporting the Jews and others the apostles. Eventually some members of both communities, Gentile and Jewish, includ-
6, 7 ing the leaders, made a plot to attack and stone them, but they came to hear of it and escaped to Lycaonia. Here, in the cities of Lystra and Derbe and in the neighbourhood, they continued preaching the gospel.

8 At Lystra there was a cripple who had never walked; he

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had been lame from birth. One day as he sat listening to 9
Paul, Paul turned a searching eye on him, and seeing he
believed he could be cured, called out loudly, 'Stand up on 10
your feet.'

The man jumped up and began to walk. When the crowd 11
saw what Paul had done they shouted out, in Lycaonian,
'The Gods have come down to us in human form,' and they 12
called Barnabas 'Zeus', and Paul, because he was the spokes-
man, 'Hermes'. The Priest of Zeus from the temple outside 13
the city now brought bulls and garlands to the gates and pre-
pared to offer public sacrifice.

When Barnabas and Paul heard of this they tore their 14
clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting, 'You men, 15
what are you doing? We are human beings like you; we
have the same feelings as you. We are here to bring you good
news, the news that there is a living God, who *made heaven*
and earth and sea and everything in them. Leave these meaning-
less things and turn to him. In the past he allowed men of all 16
races to go their own way, though even then he showed that 17
he existed by the good things he gave you – rain from the
sky, seasons of harvest, food for your bodies, and happiness
for your hearts.' With this explanation they managed, 18
though with difficulty, to prevent the crowds from offering
sacrifice to them.

It was after this that some Jews from Antioch and Iconium 19
arrived in Lystra. They won the people over, stoned Paul,
dragged him out of the city and left him for dead. But while 20
the disciples were standing round him he got to his feet and
re-entered the city.

THE JOURNEY BACK TO SYRIAN ANTIOCH

The next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. There 21
they preached the gospel and acquired many disciples. They
then returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, where they 22

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fortified the spirits of the disciples and encouraged them to stand firm in the faith. Their text was: 'We must pass
23 through many tribulations to reach the kingdom of God.' In each church they appointed elders, and with prayer and fasting commended them all to the Lord in whom they had
24 put their faith. Then they made their way back through
25 Pisidia to Pamphylia, and after preaching the gospel in
26 Perga went down to Attalia. From there they sailed to Antioch (in Syria), where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work which they had now completed.
27 On their arrival they called an assembly of the church and gave a full account of what God had done through them, and explained that God had opened the door of faith to the
28 Gentiles. And here they remained with the disciples for a long time.

THE COUNCIL OF JERUSALEM

15 A party of Jews from Judaea now arrived in Antioch and started to teach the Brotherhood this doctrine: 'Unless you are circumcised, in accordance with the Law of Moses, you
2 cannot be saved.' Paul and Barnabas vigorously opposed them and contested their doctrine. Consequently a delegation, which included Paul and Barnabas, was sent to Jerusalem to settle the question with the Apostles and Elders.
3 They were escorted for part of the way by the members of the church, then journeyed on through Phoenicia and Samaria. Everywhere the members of the Brotherhood, when they learnt of the conversion of the Gentiles, received
4 the news with great joy. On their arrival in Jerusalem they were received by the Apostles, the Elders, and the congregation of the church, and gave a full report of what God had
5 done through them. However, some members of the sect of Pharisees who had embraced the Faith rose to say that converted Gentiles should be circumcised and told to keep the

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Law of Moses. A meeting of the Apostles and Elders was 6
called to consider the question, and after a lengthy discussion
Peter rose and addressed them. 7

‘Brothers, you know that in the early days God chose me
from your number as the one to tell the Gentiles the gospel
message and to convert them. And God, who knows the 8
hearts of men, showed his approval of them when he granted
them, as he had granted us, the Holy Spirit. He made no dis- 9
tinction between them and us, and made their hearts pure
by faith. Why are you trying to outdo God by placing a 10
burden on the converts which was too heavy even for us and
our forefathers to bear? Our hope of salvation, no less than 11
theirs, lies in the grace of the Lord Jesus.’

Silence fell on the assembly. Paul and Barnabas next de- 12
scribed the miracles and wonders that God had performed
through them. After they had finished James spoke. 13

‘Members of the Brotherhood,’ he said, ‘listen to me.
Symeon Peter has described the first occasion on which God 14
visited the Gentiles and took from them a new *chosen people*
to bear his name. The words in the Book of Prophets confirm 15
this, for they say,

“After this I will return, 16
And will rebuild the fallen tabernacle of David,
And I will rebuild its ruins and will restore it,
So that the rest of mankind, all the Gentiles who 17, 18
belong to me,
May seek out the Lord,”
Saith the Lord, who revealed these truths in
times of old.

So I propose that we do not trouble the Gentile converts in 19
this way, but instead write and tell them just that they must 20
abstain from meat that has been sacrificed to idols, from
fornication, from the flesh of animals killed by strangling,

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21 and from flesh which still has the blood in it. Moses will continue to be read in the synagogues Sabbath after Sabbath, and to have people in every city to proclaim his Law, as he has had for generations.'

22 With the concurrence of the whole church the Apostles and Elders then passed a resolution to elect delegates to go to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. Judas Barsabbas and Silas, both leading members of the Brotherhood, were elected.

23 They were given a letter to take, which ran:

The apostles and elder brothers send greetings to the Gentile
24 members of the Brotherhood in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. We have heard that some of our number, without commission from us, have caused great distress of spirit among you by spreading misleading doctrines. We resolved unanimously to send delegates back
25 to you with our well-loved Barnabas and Paul, men who have
26 devoted their lives to the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ. The delegates we have sent are Judas and Silas, who will confirm this message by word of mouth. It is the decision of the Holy Spirit, and our
27 decision, to impose on you no greater burden than these essential
28 conditions: abstaining from meat that has been sacrificed to idols, from flesh which still has the blood in it, from the flesh of animals killed by strangling, and from fornication. You will do right if you
29 abstain from these things. Farewell.

30 The delegates left as instructed and reached Antioch. They called an assembly of the community and handed over the
31 letter. When it had been read aloud the congregation were
32 both relieved and delighted. Judas and Silas, who themselves possessed the prophetic spirit, gave long addresses which
33 heartened and strengthened the Brotherhood. They spent some time there, and when they left the Brotherhood and returned to those who had sent them, peace had been re-
34 stored. Paul and Barnabas, however, stayed on in Antioch, and with a band of fellow-workers taught and preached the
35 gospel of the Lord.

Chapter Sixteen

PAUL AND BARNABAS QUARREL AND PART

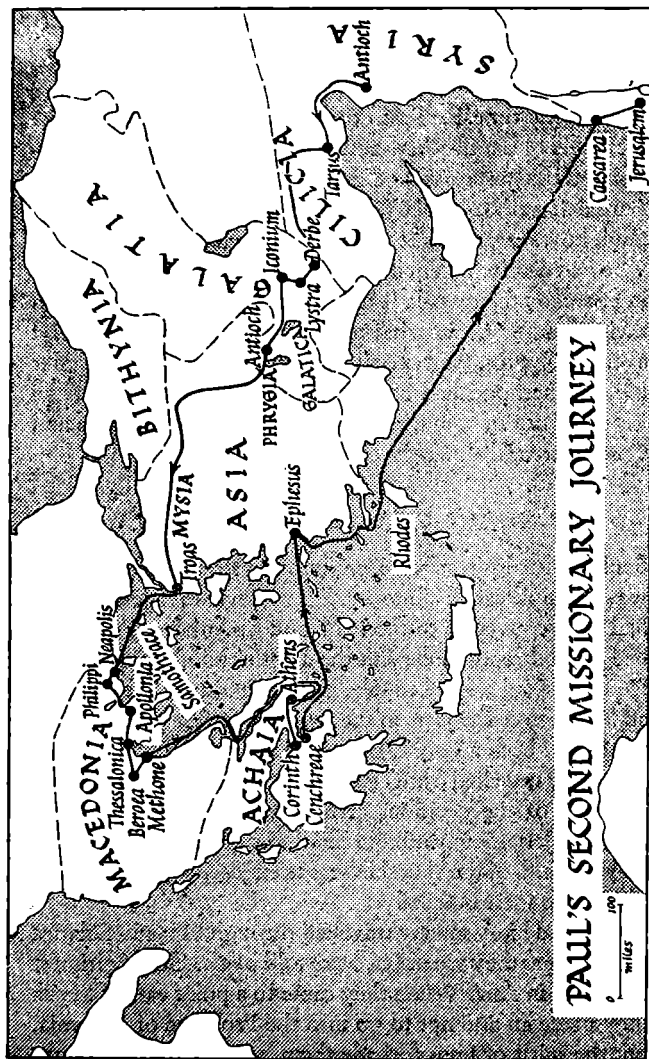
After some time Paul said to Barnabas, 'Let us revisit the 36
members of the Brotherhood in all the cities where we pro-
claimed the gospel of the Lord, and find out how they are.'
Barnabas wanted to take John Mark as one of their company. 37
Paul, however, thought it wrong to have with them a man 38
who had deserted them in Pamphylia instead of accompany-
ing them on their work. A quarrel took place, and resulted in 39
their separating. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed
away to Cyprus. Paul chose Silas as his companion, and after 40
the Brotherhood had committed him to the grace of the
Lord, set out on a journey. He travelled through Syria and 41
Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

PAUL IN CILICIA AND GALATIA

Paul eventually reached Derbe and Lystra. In Lystra there 16
was a disciple called Timothy. His mother was a Jewess who
had been converted to the Faith and his father a Greek. He 2
had a good reputation with the Brotherhood at Lystra and
Iconium. Paul wished to take him with him on his journey, 3
and because of the Jews in the region, who all knew that his
father had been a Greek, circumcised him.

As they travelled from city to city they informed the com- 4
munities of the decisions arrived at by the Apostles and
Elders in Jerusalem, and told them to carry them out. In this 5
way the faith of the churches was strengthened, and the con-
gregations increased daily.

Paul and his company travelled through Phrygia Galatica 6
preaching as they went, but were told by the Holy Spirit not
to preach in Asia. When they came to a point east of Mysia 7
they made an attempt to go into the Province of Bithynia,
but the spirit of Jesus forbade them, so they passed straight 8



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through Mysia and came down to Troas. Here Paul had a 9
vision one night – of a Macedonian standing imploring him
with the words, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’
When Paul had this vision we immediately prepared to go to 10
Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach
the gospel there.

PAUL AND THE FORTUNE-TELLER OF PHILIPPI

We set sail from Troas and had a straight run to Samothrace, 11
and the next day to Neapolis. From here we went to Philippi, 12
the most important city of its district of Macedonia, and a
Roman colony. We stayed here a few days and on the Sab- 13
bath went outside the city gate to the riverside, the usual
place of prayer, and sat talking with the women who had
gathered there. One of these was called Lydia. She was a 14
native of Thyatira, in the purple dye trade, and an observer of
Jewish religious customs. She listened attentively and God
opened her heart for Paul’s words to enter. She and her house- 15
hold were baptized.

‘As you have considered me a true convert to the Lord,
come and stay at my house,’ she urged us, and we agreed to
do so.

One day as we were on our way to prayer we encountered 16
a slave-girl with second sight, whose fortune-telling brought
in a large income to her owners. She kept following Paul 17
and us and calling out, ‘These men are servants of the Most
High God, and can tell you how to save your souls.’ She 18
went on doing this day after day, till Paul grew angry and
turned round and said to the spirit, ‘I command you in the
name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.’

Then and there it left her, and with it, as her owners 19
realized, went their means of income. So they caught hold
of Paul and Silas and dragged them off to the authorities in 20

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- the city centre. When they had brought them before the chief magistrates they said, 'These men are causing a disturbance in our city. They are Jews, and are advocating customs which it would be illegal for us as Roman citizens to accept and practise.'
- 21 The speech roused the feelings of the crowd against Paul and Silas, and the chief magistrates ordered them to be stripped and flogged. After a severe beating they were thrown into prison, and the prison governor was given strict orders to guard them closely. On receiving these orders he flung them into an inner cell and secured their feet in the stocks.

THE EARTHQUAKE IN PHILIPPI

- 25 At midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, with the other prisoners listening, when suddenly there was a violent earthquake. The prison foundations rocked, all the doors flew open simultaneously and the fetters of all the prisoners were pulled loose. The prison governor awoke, saw the cell doors open, and thinking the prisoners had escaped drew his sword to kill himself. But Paul shouted out loudly, 'Don't harm yourself. We're all here.'
- 29 The man called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling at the feet of Paul and Silas. He then led them out and asked, 'Gentlemen, what must I do to be saved?'
- 31 'Believe in the Lord Jesus,' they answered, 'and you and your household will be saved.' They then explained to him the gospel of the Lord, in the presence of the rest of his household. So then and there, at that late hour, after washing the wounds caused by their flogging, he and all his household were baptized. He conducted them in to his house and gave them a meal, and the hearts of the whole household overflowed with joy at having found God.
- 35 When day came the chief magistrates sent the sergeants

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with orders for their release, which the prison governor 36
conveyed to Paul.

'The chief magistrates,' he told them, 'have sent instructions for your release, so you may come out and go on your way.'

Paul, however, said to the men, 'They have beaten us publicly, without trial, though we are Roman citizens, and have thrown us INTO prison. Are they now trying to throw us OUT secretly? No! They must come in person and conduct us out.'

The sergeants reported this to the chief magistrates, who 38
were alarmed at the news that they were Roman citizens. They came and did their best to pacify them, and after conducting them out of the prison asked them if they would leave the city. So they left the prison and went to Lydia's 39
house, and after seeing the Brotherhood and giving them 40
words of encouragement went on their way.

VARIED FORTUNES IN MACEDONIA

They took the road through Amphipolis and Apollonia and 17
reached Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. According to his usual custom Paul went there and for three 2
weeks he held discussions with them on the Scriptures, explaining by reference to the texts that the Messiah had to die 3
and rise again from the dead. 'The Jesus of whom I am telling you,' he said, 'is the Messiah.' Some of the Jews were convinced, and by God's will joined Paul and Silas, as did a large 4
number of the Greek adherents of the synagogue and many of the wives of the leading men. This aroused the envy of the 5
Jews, who enlisted the worst of the idlers of the market-place, collected a mob, and threw the city into disorder. They surrounded the house of Jason and searched for them to bring them before the Assembly of the People. As they did not 6
find them they dragged off Jason and some of the Brotherhood instead to the politarchs.

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‘These men,’ they shouted, ‘have stirred up trouble all over the world, and have now come to us. They’re staying at Jason’s house. They’re all going against the decrees of Caesar and say that there’s another Emperor, someone called Jesus.’

Feelings ran high when the mob and the politarchs heard this. Jason and the rest had to undertake to stand security for Paul and Silas’ good behaviour before they were released, and the Brotherhood promptly sent Paul and Silas away by night to Beroea. On their arrival they went into the Jewish synagogue. The Jews here were finer spirits than those in Thessalonica, for they eagerly accepted the Word, and every day examined the Scriptures to verify this new interpretation. Many of them were converted, including quite a number of the influential Greek women and men.

However, when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the Word of God was being proclaimed by Paul in Beroea as well they followed him there and again stirred up trouble among the people. The Brotherhood immediately sent Paul to the coast, though Silas and Timothy remained. Paul’s escort conducted him to Athens and returned with instructions from him to Silas and Timothy to join him there with all speed.

PAUL IN ATHENS

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens his indignation was aroused by the sight of idols everywhere in the city. So he began holding discussions with the Jews and the observers of Jewish religious customs in the synagogue, and every day entered into argument with the passers-by in the city centre. Among others, some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers crossed swords with him. ‘What is this diletante trying to say?’ they asked, while others, who had heard the words ‘Jesus’ and ‘Resurrection’ in his preaching,

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said, 'He would appear to be promulgating the cult of strange deities.' They took him and brought him before the Council of the Areopagus. 19

'May we know,' they asked, 'what this new teaching of yours is? What you say is unfamiliar to our ears. We are consequently interested to know what it means.' (All Athenians and foreigners living in Athens had no time for anything else but communicating or listening to new ideas.) Paul, then, standing in the centre of the Council of the Areopagus, began his speech. 20 21 22

'Men of Athens, I notice that you are in many ways very interested in religion. For I have been walking round looking at your objects of worship, and among them I came across an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. The Deity you worship but do not know I can make known to you. 23

'*The God who made the world and everything in it does not live in man-made temples, for he is lord of heaven and earth. Nor can he who gave life and breath, indeed everything, to all creatures, lack anything, or need the service of human hands. He created the first man and from him all the races of men that now cover the face of the earth, after first fixing the dates of the rise and fall of nations and their territorial boundaries. His purpose was that they should seek God, grope for him and find him – though in reality he is not far from any of us. "For in him we live and move and have our being."* To quote even some of your own poets, 24 25 26 27 28

For we also are his offspring.

Therefore as we are the offspring of God we ought not to imagine that the Deity bears any resemblance to gold or silver or stone shaped by mortal hand and brain. 29

'However, God does not blame men for the times when they *did not know him*, but he now commands all men everywhere to repent, for he has set aside a day when he is going 30 31

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justly to judge the world in the person of a Man whom he has appointed; and as proof of this he has resurrected him from the dead.'

32 On hearing about resurrection of the dead some began to laugh ironically. Others said, 'We will hear what you have to say on this subject another time.'

33, 34 So ended Paul's hearing in the Council. There were some, however, who attached themselves to him and were converted, in particular Dionysius, a member of the Council of the Areopagus, and a woman called Damaris.

EIGHTEEN MONTHS IN CORINTH

18 After this Paul left Athens and came to Corinth. Here he
2 found a Jew called Aquila, a native of Pontus, and his wife Priscilla, who had recently come from Italy as a result of Claudius' edict banishing all Jews from Rome. He went to
3 their house and because they, like him, were leather-workers
4 by trade he stayed with them and they worked together, and every Sabbath he held discussions in the synagogue, trying
5 to convert the Jews and the Greeks. However, when Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, he devoted himself
6 entirely to preaching, using his own experience as evidence to convince the Jews that the Messiah was Jesus. But they ranged themselves against him and blasphemed Christ, whereupon he rejected them with a symbolical shake of his robes.

'The responsibility for your fate be upon your own heads,' he said. 'I am not to blame. From now on I am going to the Gentiles.'

7 He left the synagogue and went to the house of a Gentile called Justus, an observer of Jewish religious customs, whose
8 house adjoined the synagogue. A leading man in the synagogue, Crispus, and all his household, were converted to a belief in the Lord; and many Corinthians, as they heard Paul, were converted and baptized.

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One night in a vision the Lord told Paul, '*Put aside your 9
fears. Go on speaking: do not be silenced. For I am with you, 10*
and no attacks shall harm you, for there are many of my
People' in this city.'

So Paul settled there and stayed eighteen months, teaching 11
the Word of God among them.

PAUL ACCUSED BEFORE GALLIO

However, when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia the Jews 12
made a concerted move to overthrow Paul, and took him
to the court of justice. Their accusation was that he 'incited 13
people to worship God illegally'. Paul was on the point of 14
replying when Gallio said to the Jews, 'If this were a case of
some actual offence or crime I would naturally take it up.
But as it is a question of words, titles, and your own Law, 15
settle the matter yourselves. I have no intention of being a
judge of affairs of this kind.' He had the Jews cleared from 16
the court, though not before the bystanders had seized 17
Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and given him a
beating in front of the judge's seat. Gallio was indifferent to
the whole affair.

THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS

Paul stayed a while longer and then took his leave of the 18
Brotherhood. At Cenchreae he cut his hair, as part of a vow,
and then sailed to Syria with Priscilla and Aquila. They 19
arrived in Ephesus, where he was to leave them, and he
went into the synagogue and held a discussion with the Jews.
They asked him to stay longer but he refused, and after 20, 21
taking his leave with the words, 'God willing, I will come
back to you again,' he left Ephesus by ship. He landed at 22
Caesarea, and went up to Jerusalem. There he paid his
respects to the Church and then went down to Antioch.

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23 After some time there he left and travelled right through Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

24 Meanwhile there had come to Ephesus a Jew called Apollos, a native of Alexandria, a man of culture and a great
25 authority on the Scriptures. He had received instruction in the Way of the Lord, and though the only baptism he knew was that of John he began with fiery enthusiasm to discuss
26 and teach in detail the story of Jesus, and to speak fearlessly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him they invited him to their home and explained the Way more fully.

27 He expressed a wish to cross into Achaia and the Brotherhood encouraged him, and wrote a letter to the disciples asking them to welcome him. When he arrived he proved of great help to the faithful through the grace that had been
28 given him, for in open debate he resoundingly refuted the Jews and proved from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.

19 While Apollos was in Corinth Paul, travelling by the higher route, reached Ephesus, where he found a group of disciples.

2 'At your conversion,' he asked them, 'did you receive the Holy Spirit?'

'No,' they told him. 'We did not even hear that there was a Holy Spirit.'

3 'Then what baptism were you baptized with?' he asked.

'With the baptism of John,' they replied.

4 'When John baptized with the baptism of repentance,' Paul explained, 'he told the people of "One coming after him", whom they were to believe in, and that One is Jesus.'

5 When they heard this they were baptized in the name of
6 the Lord Jesus, and with the laying-on of Paul's hands the Holy Spirit descended on them, and they cried out in
7 ecstasy and uttered prophecies. (There were about twelve men in this group.)

8 For three months Paul went to the synagogue and spoke fearlessly, trying to convince them by reasoning of the

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truths of the kingdom of God. But when some of them 9
obstinately refused to believe, and spoke abusively about the
Way in front of the congregation, he left them and taking
the disciples with him continued his daily discussions in the
lecture-hall of Tyrannus.

MAGICIANS IN EPHESUS

Two years passed in this way, with the result that everyone 10
in Asia, Jews and Greeks alike, heard the Word of the Lord.
In addition God brought about unusual miracles at Paul's 11
hands, and as a result even kerchiefs or aprons he had worn 12
were taken to the sick, who were cured of their physical and
mental illnesses. Some wandering Jewish exorcists also at- 13
tempted to name the name of the Lord Jesus over madmen
with the formula, 'I conjure you in the name of Jesus of
whom Paul preaches.' The seven sons of Sceva, a Jew, and a 14
'Chief Priest', began doing this. The reply of one evil spirit 15
to them, however, was, 'Jesus I know and Paul I know
of, but who are you?' and the madman leapt at them, 16
overpowered two of them and stripped them naked and
severely mauled them before they managed to escape from
his house. All the Jews and Greeks of Ephesus heard about 17
this and it caused universal awe and made the name of the
Lord Jesus a name to be venerated. Many of those already 18
converted came forward and in public confession disclosed
their magic spells, and several practitioners of magic col- 19
lected their books and made a fire of them in public. Their
value was estimated at 50,000 pieces of silver.

By such great victories the Word of the Lord continued 20
to spread and demonstrate its power.

THE RIOT IN EPHESUS

At the end of this period the Spirit moved Paul to plan a 21

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journey through Macedonia and Achaia and a visit to Jerusalem. 'After I have been there,' he said, 'I must go to Rome
22 as well.' He sent two of his assistants, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, but himself remained a while in Asia.

23 It was about this time that a violent disturbance occurred
24 concerning the Way. There was a man called Demetrius, a silversmith engaged in the making of miniature silver
statuettes of Artemis, who brought a great deal of business
25 to his fellow-craftsmen. He summoned a meeting of these craftsmen and of the workmen engaged in the trade, and addressed them in these words:

'Comrades, you know that this craft is our livelihood.
26 And your eyes and ears tell you that this man Paul, not only here in Ephesus but almost all over Asia as well, has won over large numbers to his way of thinking, and tells them
27 that gods made by hands are not real gods. There is then a real danger not only that our trade may be discredited but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may come to be neglected, and the goddess herself, whom all Asia and the world worships, may quite soon be shorn of her magnificence.'

28 This speech roused them to fury, and they started shouting
29 out, 'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians.' The city was thrown into chaos. Two Macedonians, Gaius and Aristarchus, travelling-companions of Paul's, were seized, and there was
30 a concerted rush into the Amphitheatre. Paul wanted to go and face the Assembly of the People, but the disciples would
31 not allow it, and some of the Asiarchs who were friendly with Paul also sent and begged him not to venture into the Amphitheatre.

There meanwhile the Assembly was in a state of confusion.
32 There was a hubbub of conflicting cries, and most of them
33 did not know what they had come for. When the Jews pushed Alexander forward, some of the crowd conjectured that it was about him. He indicated with a gesture that he

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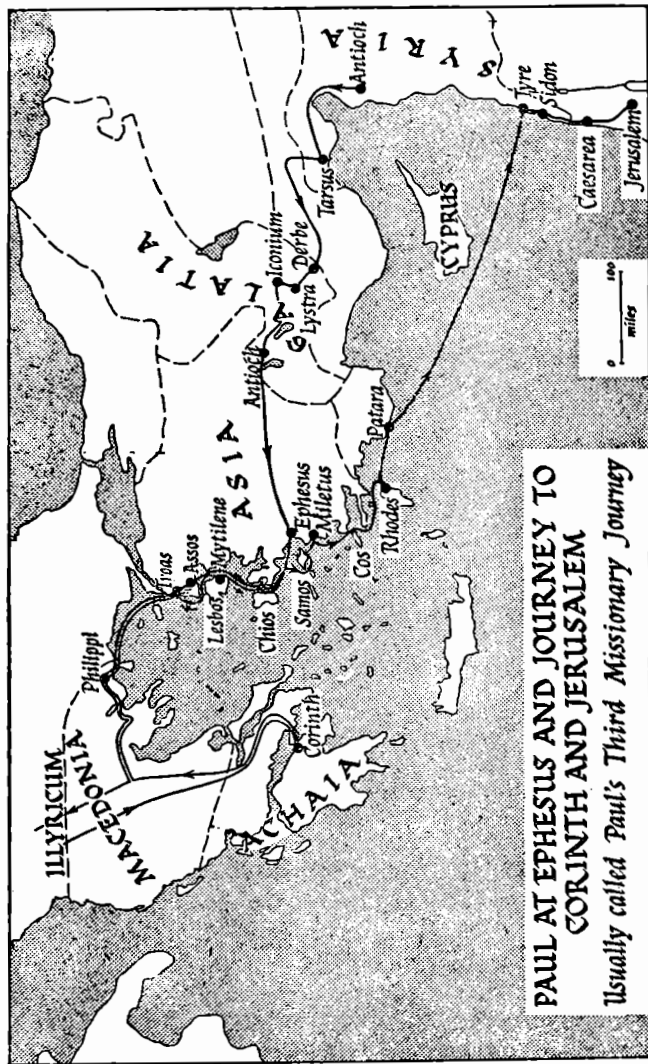
wished to offer a defence before the Assembly, but when they 34
saw that he was a Jew they roared out in unison, 'Great is
Artemis of the Ephesians,' and went on doing so for about
two hours. The Mayor finally quietened the crowd and 35
addressed them.

'Men of Ephesus,' he began, 'who is there who is not
aware that the city of Ephesus is Warden of the Temple of
the great Artemis and of her image that fell from Zeus? No 36
one can dispute this, so there is no need for this uproar, or for
any precipitate action. The men you have brought here are 37
not guilty of sacrilege, or of blaspheming our Goddess. If 38
Demetrius and his fellow-craftsmen have a case against any-
one, well, there are the assizes and the proconsuls, and the
parties must go to law. But if there are other matters into 39
which you wish to hold an inquiry, they should be settled
in the regular Assembly. As it is we are likely to be accused 40
of causing a riot because of today's meeting, which we had
no business to hold, and we will not be able to give a satis-
factory explanation of this rowdy gathering.'

After this speech he dismissed the Assembly. 41

MACEDONIA, GREECE, AND THE START OF THE JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

When the uproar had died down Paul sent for the disciples 20
and with words of encouragement said farewell and left for
Macedonia. He travelled through the country, speaking fre- 2
quently and raising the spirits of the congregations. Then he
went on into Greece. After he had spent three months there 3
he was on the point of sailing for Syria when a plot against
his life was discovered, so he decided to return by way of
Macedonia instead. His companions on the journey were: 4
Sopater of Beroea, the son of Pyrrhus; Aristarchus and
Secundus of Thessalonica; and Gaius of Doberus and
Timothy. In addition there were Tychicus and Trophimus



**PAUL AT EPHESUS AND JOURNEY TO
CORINTH AND JERUSALEM**
Usually called Paul's Third Missionary Journey

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of Asia, who had gone ahead and were waiting for us at 5
Troas. We sailed from Philippi after the Passover season, and 6
in five days joined them in Troas, where we stayed for seven
days. 11

MIRACLE AT MIDNIGHT

On the first day of the week, on the eve of his departure, 7
when we were assembled for the breaking of bread, Paul
was holding a discussion with them and went on talking till
midnight. There were a number of torches in the upper room 8
where we had gathered, and a young man called Eutychus 9
sitting on the window-sill was becoming more and more
drowsy. Paul's discourse went on and on until the young
man finally dropped off to sleep and fell three storeys to the
ground. When they picked him up he was dead. Paul, how- 10
ever, threw himself on him and put his arms round him.

'There is life in him,' he said to them. 'Stop making such
a fuss.'

He went upstairs to celebrate the breaking of bread and 11
have a meal. After a long talk with them lasting till dawn he
left the house. There was great rejoicing when the young 12
man rejoined them safe and sound.

We meanwhile had already gone down to the ship, and 13
we sailed for Assos where we were to take Paul on board.
These were his instructions. He himself intended to go by
land. He met us at Assos, came on board, and we went on to 14
Mytilene. We sailed on from there and the following day put 15
in at a point opposite Chios. The next day we crossed over
to Samos, and on the day after we arrived in Miletus.

PAUL'S FAREWELL TO THE EPHESIANS

Paul had sailed past Ephesus intentionally, to avoid spend- 16
ing much time in Asia as he was in a hurry to be in Jerusalem

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17 if possible for the day of Pentecost. But from Miletus he sent
to Ephesus asking the elders of the church to come to him,
18 and on their arrival he addressed them in these words:

‘You know about my way of life all the time I was with
19 you, from the first day I set foot in Asia – how I served the
Lord in all humility, served him with my tears and served
him by enduring the trials to which I was subjected by the
20 plots of the Jews; and how I never shrank from disclosing
anything that was vital to you, or from teaching you publicly
21 and in your homes, stressing to Jews and Greeks alike the
necessity of repentance before God and faith in our Lord
22 Jesus. And now – I am going to Jerusalem, where the spirit
23 leads me, not knowing what will happen to me there, know-
ing only that in every city the Holy Spirit prophesies that
24 imprisonment and tribulation await me. But my life is of no
importance to me provided I endure to the end and complete
the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, that is, to
25 bear witness to the gospel of the grace of God. And now – I
know that none of you among whom I once went about
26 preaching the Kingdom will ever see me again. So today
I solemnly declare that I am not to blame for any man’s
27 damnation, because I never shrank from proclaiming the
whole of God’s will.

28 ‘Keep a watchful eye on yourselves and on the flock over
which the Holy Spirit has set you as guardians, to shepherd
the Church of the Lord which he *purchased* with his own
29 blood. I know that after my departure ravening wolves will
30 come among you and will show no mercy on the flock; yes,
and from among yourselves will emerge men who will dis-
31 tort the truth to seduce the disciples. So keep watch, and
remember how night and day for three years I ceaselessly
warned you all, with tears.

32 ‘And now I commit you to the Lord and to the revelation
of his grace, which has the power to build up your char-
acters and give you the *inheritance* you share with *all who live*

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dedicated lives. I coveted no man's silver or gold or valuables. 33
You yourselves know that I supplied my needs and the needs 34
of my companions with these very hands. I have always 35
shown you by my example that it is by one's own toil that
one must provide for the poor, remembering the words of
the Lord Jesus who himself said, "It is more blessed to give
than to receive." '

With these words he knelt and prayed with the whole 36
group. They all burst into tears, and fell on Paul's neck and 37
kissed him again and again, deeply distressed by his saying 38
that they would never see him again. They then escorted
him to the ship.

FRIENDS AND WARNINGS ON THE JOURNEY

We finally tore ourselves away from them and set sail. We 21
sailed a straight course to Cos, and on the next day to Rhodes,
and from there to Patara. We found a ship crossing to 2
Phoenicia, went on board and set sail. We sighted Cyprus, 3
and leaving it on the left sailed on to Syria, landing at Tyre,
for the ship's cargo was to be unloaded there. We found 4
the disciples and remained there seven days. Warned by the
Spirit they told Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. When our 5
time was up and we had to leave them and continue our
journey, all of them escorted us outside the city with their
wives and children. We knelt on the shore and prayed, and 6
then said farewell to each other, we going on board the ship
and they returning to their homes.

Continuing our voyage we left Tyre and reached Ptole- 7
mais, where we greeted the Brotherhood and stayed the
night with them. The next day we left Ptolemais and reached 8
Caesarea, where we went to the house of Philip the Evan-
gelist, one of 'the Seven', and stayed with him. He had four 9
unmarried daughters with the gift of prophecy. When we 10

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had been there several days a prophet called Agabus arrived
11 from Jerusalem. He came to us, took Paul's belt, bound his
own hands and feet and said,

'Thus says the Holy Spirit, "In the same way will the
Jews in Jerusalem bind and deliver into the hands of the
Gentiles the man who owns this belt."'

12 When we heard this we and those who lived there begged
13 Paul not to continue on to Jerusalem. But Paul said, 'Why
are you crying and breaking my heart like this? I am pre-
pared to be more than imprisoned. I am even prepared to die
at Jerusalem for the sake of the Lord Jesus.'

14 As he would not be persuaded we said, 'The Lord's will
be done,' and said no more.

ARRIVAL AND RECEPTION IN JERUSALEM

15 At the end of our stay we hired horses and we set out
16 for Jerusalem accompanied by some of the disciples from
Caesarea. They escorted us as far as the house of Mnason, a
Cypriot, one of the original disciples, with whom we were
17 to break our journey. On our arrival in Jerusalem we were
warmly welcomed by the Brotherhood.

18 The next day, in the presence of all the Elders, Paul and
19 the rest of us were received by James. After exchanging
greetings with them Paul gave a full account of what God
20 had achieved among the Gentiles through his ministry. They
praised God for the news and then said to Paul,

'You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have
been converted. They are all of them ardent upholders of the
21 Law of Moses, but they have been informed that everywhere
in the Gentile world you teach the Jews to renounce the Law
of Moses, instructing them not to circumcise their children
22 or follow the other traditional customs. What do you plan
to say, for they will undoubtedly hear of your arrival?

23 'We suggest that you take this course: there are four men

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with us who are under a vow. Take them with you and 24
make a similar vow yourself and then pay the expenses in-
volved in fulfilling their vows. This will prove to everyone
that there is no truth in the allegations against you, and that
you yourself in your own life observe the Law. As for the 25
Gentile converts, our letter conveyed to them our decision
that they should merely abstain from meat that has been
sacrificed to idols, from flesh which still has the blood in it,
from the flesh of animals killed by strangling, and from
fornication.'

Paul took the men with him and the next day after placing 26
himself under a vow similar to theirs went into the Temple
and gave notice of the time when the vow was to end and
when the offering for each of them was to be made.

THE RIOT IN THE TEMPLE

Before the seven days were ended the Jews from Asia, 27
catching sight of him in the Temple, stirred the crowd to a
frenzy and seized him, shouting out,

'Men of Israel, come and help! This is the man who every- 28
where talks treason against Israel, the Law, and this Temple.
And now he has even brought Greeks into the Temple, and
defiled this Holy Place.' (They had previously seen the 29
Ephesian Trophimus with Paul in the city and imagined that
Paul had brought him into the Temple.)

The whole city was roused. The Jews ran to the spot, 30
caught Paul and dragged him outside the Temple. Im-
mediately the gates were shut behind them. While they set 31
about killing him a report was taken up to the military
tribune in command of the cohort that the whole of Jeru-
salem was in riot. He immediately rushed centurions and 32
soldiers to the spot. At the sight of the tribune and the
soldiers they stopped hitting Paul. When the tribune had 33
come near he took hold of Paul and gave orders for him to be

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- handcuffed on both sides, and inquired who he was and what
34 he had done. The crowd started shouting out, some one thing
some another, so unable to learn the facts because of the hub-
35 bub he ordered him to be taken into the Fort. When he
reached the flight of steps Paul had to be carried by the
36 soldiers because of the violence of the mob, for the Jews
were following him in a crowd yelling out, 'Kill him!'
37 Paul was just about to be taken into the Fort when he said
to the tribune, 'May I speak to you?'
38 'So you can talk Greek?' he exclaimed. 'Then you're not
the Egyptian who recently stirred up the 4000 "Assassins"
and led them into the desert?'
39 'I am a Jew,' Paul replied, 'from Tarsus in Cilicia, and a
citizen of that by no means insignificant city. Will you
please allow me to speak to the people?'
40 Paul's request was granted, and standing on the steps he
made a gesture for silence. A great hush fell, and he addressed
them, in Aramaic.

PAUL'S SPEECH TO THE CROWD

22 'Brethren, Fathers, hear my defence.'

- 2 When they heard him talking to them in Aramaic the
3 silence deepened. Paul went on,

'I am a Jew. I was born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but I was
brought up in this city, and educated in strict accordance
with our ancestral Law at the Academy of Gamaliel. I was
4 full of religious fervour – like you today. I persecuted this
Way to the death, and chained and imprisoned the men and
5 women who belonged to it; the High Priest and the whole
Sanhedrin can bear this out. When I went to Damascus I had
letters from them to our Jewish brethren there empowering
me to bring any Christians there back to Jerusalem in chains
6 for punishment. About midday, as I was approaching
Damascus on my journey, a bright light from heaven sud-

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denly shone round me. I fell to the ground, and heard a voice 7
saying to me, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

"Who are you, sir?" I answered. 8

"I am Jesus of Nazareth," he said. "It is I whom you are
persecuting." Those with me saw the light but did not hear 9
the voice of the person speaking with me.

"What must I do?" I asked. 10

"Get up, and go to Damascus," the Lord told me. "There
you will be told about all the work that has been assigned to
you."

"As I had been blinded by the brightness of the light my 11
companions took my hand and led me into Damascus. A 12
man called Ananias, a strict and devout Jew and highly
respected by all the Jews there, came and stood by me, and 13
said, "Brother Saul, receive your sight."

"Then and there I looked up at him and could see.

"The God of our fathers," he said, "has chosen you to 14
know his will, and to see the Righteous One and to hear his
voice from his own lips. For you are to be a witness for him 15
to all mankind of what you have seen and heard. Be baptized 16
without delay and wash your sins away, calling on his name."

"One day after I had returned to Jerusalem, I was praying 17
in the Temple when I fell into a trance and saw him. 18

"Quick," he said to me. "Leave Jerusalem as soon as you
can, for they will not accept evidence about me from you."

"Lord," I replied, "that is because they know that I im- 19
prisoned those who believed in you and had them beaten in
the synagogues, and because while the blood was streaming 20
from your witness Stephen I even stood by approving, look-
ing after the clothes of those who were killing him."

"Go immediately," he told me. "I am sending you far 21
afield among the Gentiles."

The crowd listened to Paul till he came to the word 22
'Gentiles', but then raised a great shout: 'Wipe him off the
face of the earth! Such a man isn't fit to live.'

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PAUL ESCAPES THE SCOURGE

- 23 As they were yelling out, waving their clothes and throw-
24 ing dust into the air, the military tribune ordered him to be
brought into the Fort and questioned under the lash to make
25 him tell why they were shouting at him. They had tied Paul
up with thongs when he said to the centurion standing by,
'Are you allowed to whip a Roman citizen, without trial?'
26 Hearing this the centurion went and said to the military
tribune, 'Whatever are you doing? This man is a Roman
citizen.'
27 The tribune came and said to Paul, 'Tell me, are YOU a
Roman citizen?'
'Yes,' he answered.
28 'But it costs a large sum to get this citizenship,' the tribune
said, 'as I know from my own experience.'
'Yes, but I was born to it.'
29 At this the men who were going to question him with-
drew. The military tribune, too, was alarmed when he
realized that he had tied up a man whom he now knew to
be a Roman citizen.
30 Next day, wanting to know exactly what the Jews were
accusing Paul of, he had him unchained and ordered a meet-
ing of the Chief Priests and the whole Sanhedrin to be called.
He then brought Paul before them.

PAUL BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN

- 23 Paul fixed his eyes on the Sanhedrin and began, 'Brethren,
all my life *I* have lived with a clear conscience in the eyes of
God.'
2 At this the High Priest, Ananias, ordered the attendants
to strike him on the mouth.
3 Paul said to him, 'It's you that God will strike, you
specious fraud. Do you use the Law to sit in judgement on

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me yet abuse the Law by ordering me to be struck?’

Here the attendants interposed, ‘Do you dare to insult the High Priest?’

‘I did not know, brethren,’ Paul replied, ‘that he was High Priest. As the Scriptures say, “Thou shalt not speak evil of a ruler of thy people.”’

When Paul realized that there were two factions present, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, he cried out, ‘I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. I am being tried because I hope for the resurrection of the dead.’

At these words a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees which split the assembly. For the Sadducees deny the possibility of the resurrection, and the existence of angels and spirits, while the Pharisees believe in both. Loud and confused shouting broke out. Some of the Pharisees’ party rose to their feet and heatedly joined the fray.

‘We find this man not guilty of any crime,’ they cried. ‘If a spirit has spoken to him, or an angel ...’

The words occasioned such an outcry that the military tribune, afraid that Paul would be torn to pieces, gave orders for the guard to come and rescue him and take him into the Fort.

That night the Lord appeared at Paul’s side and said, ‘Have courage. You have witnessed to me in Jerusalem; you must bear witness in the same way in Rome.’

PAUL IS SENT TO CAESAREA

When day came some Jews banded together and made a vow not to eat or drink till they had killed Paul. More than forty were involved in this conspiracy. They approached the High Priest and Elders and said, ‘We have made a sacred vow to let nothing pass our lips till we have killed Paul. We want you, with the Sanhedrin, to persuade the military tribune to bring Paul before you on the pretext of a more thorough

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examination of his case. Our plan is to kill him before he gets there.'

16 The son of Paul's sister, however, heard of the plot and
17 went to the Fort and told Paul. Paul called one of the centurions and said, 'Take this young man to the military tribune; he has something to tell him.'

18 The centurion took him to the tribune and said, 'The prisoner Paul called me and asked me to bring this young man to you. He has something to say to you.'

19 The tribune took him by the hand and drawing him aside asked him privately, 'What have you to tell me?'

20 'The Jews,' he answered, 'have planned to ask you to take Paul before the Sanhedrin tomorrow, pretending they want
21 a more thorough inquiry. But don't listen to them, as more than forty of them are going to ambush him – they have vowed not to eat or drink anything till they have killed him. They're all ready, just waiting for you to agree.'

22 The tribune told the young man not to let anyone know that he had disclosed this information, and sent him away.

23 He then sent for two centurions and gave them these orders: 'Make preparations for 200 heavy infantry, 70 horsemen, and 200 spearmen to go to Caesarea, setting out at nine tonight.

24 Provide mounts for Paul, and take him safely to the Governor Felix.'

25 He also wrote a letter, to this effect:

26 Greetings to His Excellency the Governor Felix from Claudius
27 Lysias. This man was caught by the Jews and was on the point of being killed by them when I came and rescued him with the guard,
28 learning that he was a Roman citizen. Determined to discover the grounds of their charge against him I brought him before their
29 Sanhedrin, and found the charge concerned questions of their Law. He was not accused of any crime punishable by death or imprisonment. I was subsequently informed that there was a plot against his
30 life, so I am sending him to you straight away, at the same time instructing the prosecution to bring their case before you.

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The soldiers took Paul as instructed and travelling by night brought him to Antipatris. The next day they returned to the Fort, leaving the horsemen to go on with him. These on their arrival in Caesarea handed the letter to the Governor and conducted Paul into his presence. He read the letter and asked him to what province he belonged. Paul replied that he came from Cilicia.

'I will hear your case when the prosecution arrives,' the Governor said, and gave orders for him to be kept under guard in Herod's Palace.

PAUL'S TRIAL BEFORE FELIX

After five days Ananias, the High Priest, came down to Caesarea with a group of Elders and an advocate called Tertullus, and brought the case against Paul before the Governor. Paul was summoned, and Tertullus opened the case for the prosecution.

'Your Excellency Felix, we are humbly grateful, now and always, for the profound peace we enjoy through your rule, and for the reforms that your foresight has brought to our people. I will not detain you unnecessarily; I must, however, ask you to listen, with your usual courtesy, while we briefly set forth the facts. This man, we have found, is a sedition-monger, stirring up dissensions among the Jews throughout the Empire. He is a ringleader of the sect of "Nazarenes". Also he actually attempted to desecrate the Temple. We of course arrested him. We wanted to try him by our own Law, but the military tribune, Lysias, came on the scene and, with considerable violence, took him out of our hands, and told the prosecution to bring their case to you. You will be able to question him and verify the truth of all our charges.'

The Jews supported these accusations, alleging that the case was as he had stated.

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10 In response to a sign from the Governor Paul now began his defence:

‘The knowledge that you have for many years been an arbiter over our nation encourages me in making my
11 defence. For you can verify that it is not more than twelve
12 days since I went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. And there they never found me holding a discussion with anyone or causing a crowd to collect in the Temple or in the synagogue or in
13 the city. Nor can they prove their present charges against me.
14 ‘However, I admit this much: I do follow the Way which they call a “sect”, but I worship the God of our fathers, believe the Law and the Books of Prophets in every point,
15 and have exactly the same hope as these men, the hope that God will grant a resurrection to the good and the wicked
16 alike. On this account I too strive to keep my conscience free from offence to God and man.

17 ‘After an absence of many years I had come to bring alms to my nation and to make offerings, and I was doing this, with a ceremonial vow upon me, when they found me in the
18 Temple. There was no crowd or disturbance, but some Jews
19 from Asia ... Why aren’t they here before you to bring whatever charges they had against me? As they are not here,
20 let these who are say what crime they found me guilty of
21 when I was standing before the Sanhedrin – all I did was to cry out as I stood in front of them, “I am on trial before you today because I believe in the resurrection of the dead.”’

22 Felix, who had a fairly accurate knowledge of the Way, adjourned the hearing, saying, ‘I will try your case when
23 Lysias the military tribune arrives.’ He gave instructions to the centurion that Paul should be kept in custody but allowed some freedom, and that his friends should be permitted to see to his wants without interference.

24 After a few days Felix, with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess, summoned Paul and listened to his exposition of the
25 Faith in Christ. But when Paul began to discourse of the good

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life, self-control, and the judgement to come, Felix became alarmed and said, 'For the time being you can go. I will call for you when I have time to spare.'

And he did send for Paul and talk privately with him, 26 quite often – especially as he was hoping for a bribe.

Two years passed. Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, 27 and in his anxiety to ingratiate himself with the Jews left Paul in prison.

PAUL APPEALS TO CAESAR

Two days after arriving to take over his province Festus left 25
Caesarea and went up to Jerusalem, where the Chief Priests 2
and Jewish leaders laid their case against Paul before him.
They asked him as a favour to have Paul brought to Jeru- 3
salem, planning to ambush and kill him on the way. Festus, 4
however, replied, 'As Paul is being kept prisoner in Caesarea
and as I myself am shortly returning there, I suggest that your 5
leaders accompany me and if he has done anything wrong
prosecute him there.'

He stayed in Jerusalem not more than eight or ten days 6
and then went down to Caesarea. Next day he took his place
on the bench and sent for Paul. When he was brought in the 7
Jews from Jerusalem stood round him and made a variety of
serious charges, none of which they could prove.

In his defence Paul said, 'I have committed no crime 8
against the Jewish Law, or against the Temple, or against
Caesar.'

Festus, however, hoping to gain popularity with the Jews, 9
turned to Paul and asked, 'Are you willing to go to Jerusalem
and stand your trial before me there?'

'I am standing in the court of Caesar,' Paul replied, 'and 10
that is where I ought to be tried; for I have committed no
offence against the Jews, as you know as well as they. If I 11
WERE guilty and had done something that deserved the death

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sentence I would not appeal against it. But as there is no truth in any of their accusations no one shall sacrifice me to gain their favour. I appeal to Caesar.'

- 12 Festus, after a consultation with his advisers, pronounced: 'You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you shall go.'

FESTUS INVITES AGRIPPA TO HEAR PAUL

- 13 After a few days King Agrippa and Bernice came to
14 Caesarea on a state visit to Festus. They stayed there some days, and Festus referred Paul's case to the king.

- 'There is a man here,' he explained, 'left in prison by
15 Felix. While I was in Jerusalem the Jewish Chief Priests and Elders brought his case to me and asked me to pronounce him guilty.

- 16 "It is not a Roman custom," I told them, "to hand over an accused man before he has been confronted by his accusers and had the opportunity of defending himself on the charge."

- 17 'So they forgathered here, and without delay, in fact on the next day, I took my place on the bench and ordered the
18 man to be brought in. But when the case for the prosecution was opened the accusations were not of the crimes I had expected, but concerned their own religious affairs and some-
19 one called Jesus, who, though dead, was claimed by Paul to be alive. I was at a loss how to conduct an inquiry into such
20 matters, and asked if he was willing to go to Jerusalem and
21 stand his trial there. But Paul appealed to be kept for trial by the Emperor, so I ordered him to remain in custody till I sent him to Caesar.'

- 22 'I should like to hear the man too,' Agrippa said to Festus. 'You shall hear him tomorrow,' Festus replied.

- 23 Next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and ceremony and entered the audience chamber with the military tribunes and dignitaries of the city. Festus gave the order and Paul was brought in.

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'Your Majesty,' Festus began, 'ladies and gentlemen, you 24
see before you the man whose case the Jewish community
brought before me, first in Jerusalem and then here, clamour-
ing for his execution. However, I found that he had done 25
nothing to deserve the death sentence, and as he himself
appealed to the Emperor I decided to send him to Rome.
But I have nothing definite to write about him to the Em- 26
peror. So I have brought him before you, your Majesty, and
you, ladies and gentlemen, in the hope that the inquiry may
produce material for my letter. There seems no sense in 27
sending a prisoner without indicating the charges against
him.'

PAUL'S DEFENCE BEFORE AGRIPPA

'You have permission to state your case,' Agrippa said to 26
Paul.

Paul stretched out his hand and began his defence. 'I con- 2
sider myself fortunate, King Agrippa, to have the oppor-
tunity today of making my defence before you on all the
charges brought against me by the Jews, especially as you 3
have expert knowledge of Jewish customs and problems. I
beg you to hear me patiently.

'The Jews all know how I have lived from youth up, for 4
from my earliest years I have spent my life among Jews,
with my own people and in Jerusalem. They have long been 5
aware – as they could testify if they wanted to – that I lived
in conformity with the strictest sect of our religion: I was
a Pharisee. It is BECAUSE I hope for the fulfilment of the 6
promise God made to our fathers that I am now standing
trial, the very promise which our twelve tribes, ardently 7
worshipping God day and night, hope to see fulfilled! It is
because of this hope, King Agrippa, that I'm accused – by
Jews! Why do you Jews of all people find it impossible to 8
believe that God raises the dead?

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- 9 'Anyway, at the time I was convinced that it was my duty
10 to combat the influence of Jesus of Nazareth, and acted on
my convictions. In Jerusalem, on the authority of the Chief
Priests, I had many of his followers imprisoned, and I voted
11 for their execution. In every synagogue I often administered
torture to make them recant by blaspheming Christ. In an
excess of fanaticism I even pursued them to foreign cities.
12 'That is how I came to be travelling to Damascus,
13 authorized and commissioned by the Chief Priests. At mid-
day on the journey, King Agrippa, I saw, brighter than the
sun, a light from heaven shining round my companions and
14 me. We fell to the earth and I heard a voice saying to me in
Aramaic, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? You
only hurt yourself by kicking against the goad."
15 ' "Who are you, sir?" I asked.
"I am Jesus," he said. "It is I whom you are persecuting.
16 But get up and *stand on your feet*. I have come for this purpose
– to appoint you my minister, to appoint you witness of this
17 vision of me and the visions to come. *I will rescue you from the
Jews and from the Gentiles. For to the Gentiles I am sending you
18 to open their eyes*, so that they may turn *from darkness to light*,
and from the power of Satan to God, and receive forgiveness
for their sins, and take their place with those whose lives have
been made holy by faith in me."
19 'How could I disobey the heavenly vision, King Agrippa?
20 First to the people of Damascus, then to the people in
Jerusalem and all the rest of Judaea and finally to the Gentiles,
I preached the necessity of turning to God and repenting,
21 and demonstrating that repentance by deeds. This was why
the Jews laid hold of me in the Temple and tried to murder
22 me. But by the grace of God I am still alive today to bear my
witness to one and all. And nothing of what I say differs from
23 what the Prophets and Moses foretold: that the Messiah
would have to die and that he would be the first to rise from
the dead and bring light to the Jews – and the Gentiles.'

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Paul had reached this point in his defence when Festus 24
cried out loudly, 'Paul, you're mad. Your great learning is
turning you mad.'

'I am not mad, Your Excellency,' Paul retorted. 'The 25
words I speak are the sober truth. His Majesty knows about 26
these matters, and to him I can speak openly. I am convinced
that none of this is unknown to him – it did not happen in a
corner. Do you believe in the Prophets, King Agrippa? I 27
know you DO!'

Agrippa countered Paul's question by saying, 'In a word, 28
you're trying to persuade me to act the Christian.'

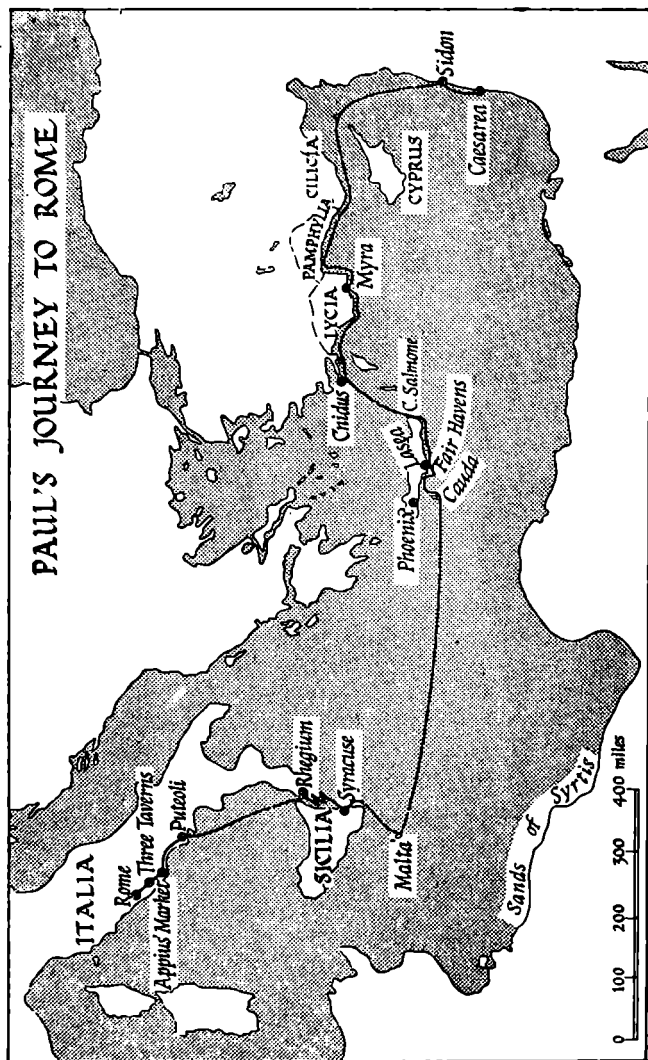
'I would to God,' Paul said, 'that I could persuade you, 29
either in one word or many, to become what I am – though
not in chains.'

The King stood up, followed by the Governor, Bernice, 30
and the rest of the company. They retired and said to one 31
another, 'This man has done nothing to deserve death or
prison.' Agrippa told Festus, 'This man could have been set 32
free, if he had not appealed to Caesar.'

THE VOYAGE TO ROME

Once it had been decided that we were to be sent to Italy 27
Paul and some other prisoners were handed over to a cen-
turiion of the Augustan Cohort called Julius. We went on 2
board a ship from Adramyttium which was bound for places
along the coast of Asia and set sail. Aristarchus a Macedonian
from Thessalonica was one of our party. Next day we put in 3
at Sidon, where with great kindness Julius allowed Paul to go
and be cared for by his friends. When we set sail again 4
contrary winds forced us to keep to the sheltered side of
Cyprus, and then crossing the sea off the coast of Cilicia and 5
Pamphylia we reached Myra in Lycia. There the centuriion 6
found a ship from Alexandria sailing for Italy, and put us on
board. After sailing slowly for many days we managed to 7

PAUL'S JOURNEY TO ROME



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reach a point off Cnidus. Here we could make no headway against the wind, so we made for Salmone and the shelter of Crete. We coasted along with difficulty till we reached a place called Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea. 8

THE STORM AND SHIPWRECK

Time went by. Navigation had become dangerous, as even the Fast of the Atonement was past. Paul gave a warning. 'I foresee,' he said, 'that before the voyage is over the ship and cargo will be seriously damaged, and there will be loss of life as well.' 9 10

The centurion, however, paid more heed to the pilot and the ship-owner than to Paul. Fair Havens was not a suitable harbour in which to winter, and the majority favoured sailing on in the hope of making Phoenix – another harbour in Crete, facing west – and wintering there. When a south wind sprang up they imagined that it answered their purpose and setting sail coasted along keeping close in to the shore. But before long a squally off-shore 'north-easter' blew up and hit the ship, which was unable to head in to it, so we let ourselves be carried along. We ran under the lee of a little island called Cauda and managed, with some difficulty, to haul in the ship's boat. They hoisted it up, and then passed cables round the ship to reinforce it. They were afraid they would be driven on to the Sands of Syrtis, so they took down the gear and were carried before the wind. The storm continued to lash us, and the next day they jettisoned some of the cargo. On the third day they were reduced to throwing the spare tackle overboard. As we had not seen the sun or stars for many days and the storm continued unabated we began to give up all hope of safety. 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

They had been a long time without food when Paul came forward and said, 'You men should have listened to what I said and not sailed from Crete. Then there would never have 21

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22 been this loss and damage. As it is, keep your spirits up, for
though the ship will be lost none of you will lose your lives.
23 Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom
24 I serve stood at my side. "Do not be afraid, Paul," he said;
"you have to stand before Caesar. And for your sake God
25 will save the lives of everyone on board." So courage, men!
I have faith in God, and believe that what I was told will come
26 true. But we still have to be wrecked on an island.'

27 At midnight on the fourteenth night, while we were still
drifting across the Mediterranean, the sailors had the feeling
28 that they were approaching land. They sounded and made
twenty fathom, and after a little while sounded again and
29 made fifteen fathom. Then for fear we should go aground on
rocks they dropped four anchors from the stern, and waited
30 longingly for the day. The sailors next made an attempt to
leave the ship, and had lowered the boat into the sea under
31 the pretext of dropping anchors from the bows when Paul
said to the centurion and the soldiers, 'Unless they stay in
32 the ship you have no chance of being saved.' At this the
soldiers cut the ropes of the boat and let her fall away.

33 When day approached Paul advised everyone to have a
meal.

'You have had fourteen days of suspense,' he said, 'without
34 anything to eat. For your own safety I advise you to have
some food. *Not a hair of any of your heads shall perish.*'

35 With these words he took a loaf and gave thanks to God
in front of everyone, and breaking off a piece began to eat.
36 Everyone's spirits rose at this, and they too had some food.
37, 38 (There were in all 276 of us on board.) When they had had
enough to eat they further lightened the ship by throwing
the wheat overboard.

39 When it was day they found that they could not recognize
the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, and on this
40 they decided if possible to run the ship. They cut the anchors
free and left them in the sea, and at the same time unlashed

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the steering-paddles. Then they hoisted the foresail to catch the wind and made for the beach. But unluckily they encountered a spot where two currents met, and the ship ran aground. The bow stuck fast, while the stern began to break up in the heavy seas.

The soldiers were for killing the prisoners to stop their swimming ashore and escaping, but the centurion, who was anxious to save Paul, prevented them. He told those who could swim to jump overboard first and make for the shore, and the rest to follow on planks or other objects from the ship. In this way they all reached land and safety.

A WINTER IN MALTA

Once we were safely ashore we recognized the island. It was Malta. The natives showed us remarkable kindness. They lit a fire and invited all of us round it, for the rain had set in and it was cold. Paul collected a bundle of dry sticks and was placing them on the fire when a viper, roused by the warmth, came out of them and fastened its fangs on his hand. When the natives saw the venomous creature hanging from his hand they said to each other, 'The man must be a murderer: he has escaped death by drowning, but justice has caught up with him all the same.'

Paul, however, shook the creature off into the fire, and came to no harm. They waited for him to swell up or fall down dead, but after a while, when they saw nothing happen, they changed their opinion and began saying he was a god.

Near this place there was an estate belonging to the chieftain of the island, whose name was Poplius. He took us in and gave us his very kind hospitality for three days.

It so happened that his father was lying ill with fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and healed him with the laying-on of hands. When this happened the rest of those on the island who were ill began coming too, and were

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- 10 given treatment. They loaded us with presents, and, when we eventually set sail three months later, supplied us with everything we needed.

PAUL ARRIVES IN ROME

- 11 The ship we sailed on was an Alexandrian ship that had wintered in the island, named from its figurehead the
12 *Heavenly Twins*. We put in at Syracuse and spent three days
13 there. When we left we tacked across to Rhegium. After we had been there one day a south wind sprang up, and we
14 reached Puteoli the next day. Here we found the Brotherhood and were invited to stay a week with them.
- 15 And this was how we came to Rome. The Brotherhood there, hearing about us, came out as far as Appius' Market and Three Taverns to welcome us. When he saw them Paul thanked God and his spirits revived.
- 16 When we entered Rome the centurion handed the prisoners over to the Commanding Officer but allowed Paul to live by himself with the soldier who guarded him.
- 17 After three days Paul called a meeting of the leading Jews of Rome.
- 18 'Brethren,' he said when they arrived, 'I am here as a prisoner from Jerusalem. I was handed over to the authority of the Romans although I had not been disloyal to our people
19 or the traditions of our fathers. And the Romans after investigating my case intended to let me go free, as I had done
20 nothing to deserve death. But the Jews opposed this course, so I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, although I had no charge to bring against our people. I have invited you to this meeting because I wanted to explain that the sole reason for my being chained like this is that I share the Hope of Israel.'
- 21 'On our part,' they answered him, 'we have had no letters about you from Judaea, nor have any of the brethren brought us a bad report of you, officially or unofficially.'

Chapter Twenty-eight

However, as all we know of this sect is that it is universally 22
attacked, we would like to hear what you have to say.'

LAST WORDS

So a day was arranged and a large group of them came to 23
his lodgings. From morning till evening he expounded his
beliefs, speaking in witness of the Kingdom of God, and, by
reference to the Law of Moses and the Book of Prophets,
trying to persuade them about Jesus. Some were convinced 24
by what he said, others remained sceptical. So the meeting 25
broke up without general agreement, after one last word
from Paul:

'The words of the Holy Spirit in the mouth of Isaiah the
Prophet to your fathers were right:

Go thou to this People and say; 26

*"You shall hear with your ears, but you shall
not understand;*

*You shall see with your eyes, but you shall not
perceive.*

For the hearts of this People have lost their feeling. 27

They have ears that are hard of hearing,

And they have shut their eyes –

In case one day they see with their eyes,

Hear with their ears,

Understand in their hearts, and be converted,

And I heal them."

I tell you this: *this gift of God's salvation* has been offered to the 28
Gentiles; and they WILL hear.'

For two whole years Paul remained in Rome at his lodg- 30
ings. He received all who visited him, proclaimed the 31
Kingdom of God and taught the story of the Lord Jesus
Christ with absolute fearlessness, without let or hindrance.

NOTES

I

- 1-5. In this opening paragraph Luke makes a link between his version of the Gospel ('my first book') and the 'Acts'. The meal he here refers to is described more fully in the last chapter of the Gospel (24. 41-43). Nothing is known of Theophilus, to whom the Gospel as well as the 'Acts' is dedicated.
3. 'The kingdom.' - The Apostles were still expecting that Jesus, as the Messiah, would re-establish, in a more glorious form, the kingdom of David, with himself as its king. Much of the prophecy in the Old Testament had fostered these hopes. By the end of the 'Acts' they have come true, but not in the way expected. The 'kingdom' then stretched as far as Rome, but the 'power' vested in the Apostles to help in establishing it was not the temporal power of governors and generals, but the power of the Holy Spirit.
9. 'He was taken up, and hidden from their view by a cloud.' - The problem of the Ascension must always remain hidden in clouds of mystery from human understanding. Some Christians have found it so far beyond their comprehension that they have discredited Luke's whole account. Others, at the opposite extreme, accept the whole account quite literally. This gives rise to crudities such as the stained-glass window in the Chapel of The Queen's College, Oxford, where two gaunt feet are represented dangling from a cloud. I would say that Luke's account has exactly the same kind of truth as his account of the visit of the Angel Gabriel to Mary. Both describe pictorially spiritual truths that HAPPENED pictorially, that is, that were revealed in visions to men's inner eyes and seemed to be seen by their outer eyes. The spiritual truth in the Annunciation was that God was to take human form; the spiritual truth in the Ascension was that God was relinquishing it. Mary and the Apostles could only be shown those truths by visions. As R. B. Rackham says, 'The reality cannot be represented to us otherwise. What is signified is that the manhood of Jesus was exalted to heaven or glorified. A foretaste of this had been given at the transfiguration. But now, having died and risen again, the SON returns to the glory which he had with the FATHER before the world was (John 17. 5); he reassumes all those glories of deity of

which he had emptied himself at the incarnation, and in this glorification the human nature which he then assumed has now a part. What are the conditions of a human body, glorified and united with the deity, it is impossible for us in our present state to conceive or imagine. In the Old Testament the incomprehensibility of the divine nature was typified by a cloud which hid JEHOVAH from human view; so now the human body of Jesus is concealed by the same cloud which is the cloud of the Shekinah or divine glory. He is now "in glory".

- 10, 11. After the vision of the Ascension the Apostles are recalled to reality by another vision, of two angels, who go on to tell them of the Second Coming. This is described by Mark in his Gospel (13. 26): 'And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory', an account which closely resembles other accounts both in the Old and in the New Testament. Luke here by the phrase 'in the same way as you saw him go' seems to imply in addition that there will be something of human nature in Christ at that Second Coming.
13. 'Up to the room where they were staying.' – It has been pleasingly conjectured that this was the room in which the Last Supper was held, and that the house belonged to Mary the mother of Mark (cf. 12. 12).
14. 'The other women.' – Mary Magdalene was probably among these women, also another Mary, Joanna, Salome, and Susanna.
- 16, 20. 'The prophecy about Judas.' – In the two psalms from which these quotations are taken, 69 and 109, the author, David, is bemoaning his miseries and calling down curses on friends who had forsaken him. A modern historian's view might be that St Peter was making an unwarranted assumption in claiming that David's words applied prophetically to Judas. The Hebraic view was that the Holy Spirit put the words in the mouth of David, and after-events revealed that they MUST apply to Judas.
18. 'This refers to Judas' death...' – These are clearly not Peter's words. They form an explanatory note by Luke. I have printed them at the foot of the page, where he would have put them had he been writing today. 'Their language' means Aramaic, the language akin to Hebrew which Jesus and his disciples would have talked.
25. 'The place where he belongs.' – An ominous phrase that probably implies torment in the next world.
26. 'Lots were cast.' – The Jewish method of casting lots was to put stones inscribed with the names into a jar, and shake it till one jumped out.

The Acts of the Apostles

2

1. 'The Day of Pentecost.' – Much has been written by commentators on the events of the Day of Pentecost, and there is great diversity of opinion. What follows is put forward humbly and tentatively.

It seems best to discuss the matter under two heads: (1) What happened; and (2) What those happenings signified.

(1) What happened. The members of the Christian Brotherhood had met on the Feast of Pentecost, probably in the 'upper room', and had a great communal spiritual experience. The Holy Spirit came down upon each of them in the form of tongues of flame. In their ecstasy, filled with emotions beyond the expression of ordinary language, they poured out their praise of God in a stream of sounds—words of their usual language, Aramaic; words of Greek, the common language of the ancient world; words of Hebrew, the usual language of the Temple services; snatches of the languages which they must have heard spoken by visitors from all over the known world who came to Jerusalem at the great festivals; and, lastly, meaningless noises of ecstatic joy.

The noise was sufficient to cause a crowd to collect, and the members of the Brotherhood must now have come down into the street, and perhaps made their way to the Temple. The crowd was polyglot. Some of them caught snatches of their own language; others could make out nothing, and assumed that the men were drunk. No one knew what was happening, and everyone kept asking everyone else. Peter came forward to explain.

If this account is substantially correct it follows that Luke's account exaggerates, particularly in the matter of the languages, for it suggests that the disciples were talking foreign languages so well that many of the heterogeneous crowd understood them. This is most improbable. In the first place, such a gift of tongues would have been a pointless gift at a time when the people of all nationalities could communicate in a common tongue, Greek. Secondly, it was not specially needed on this occasion, as they were addressing God, not men. Thirdly, Peter makes no reply in his speech to the crowd's recorded questions about languages; the only suggestion he answers, and rebuts, is that of drunkenness. Lastly, nothing further is heard in the 'Acts' about the gift of tongues.

Where Luke, or rather the authority from whom he had the story, went astray was perhaps in a literal and wrong interpreta-

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tion of the Greek phrase *glossolalia*. Literally it does mean 'speaking with tongues', but it always denotes 'speaking in ecstasy'. The origin of the expression, according to Thayer's Lexicon, 'is apparently to be found in the fact that in Hebrew the tongue is the leading instrument by which the praises of God are proclaimed', and in inspiration 'nothing human in an inspired man was thought to be active except the tongue, put in motion by the Holy Spirit.' A writer who did not know the usual sense in which the word was used, but did know its etymology, might well have assumed that it meant 'speaking a foreign tongue'. This interpretation would then have coloured the whole account.

Glossolalia is mentioned on two other occasions in the 'Acts' (10. 46 and 19. 6) with the meaning 'talking in ecstasy'. St Paul (1 Cor. 12-14) gives a long account of it, and contrasts it with 'prophecy'. He puts it lowest among the gifts of grace, and explains its dangers: it does not help the rest of the congregation, as 'prophecy' does, because it is unintelligible to them; and it tends to cause disorder.

(2) What the happenings at Pentecost signified. The word 'Pentecost' comes from the Greek and means 'fiftieth'. The Festival came fifty days (or seven weeks) after the Passover; in the Old Testament it was called the 'Feast of Weeks'. It was the Jewish harvest festival, when they offered up the first-fruits of the wheat harvest. It was also the festival when they commemorated God's giving of the commandments and the Law of Moses on Mount Sinai. At this Pentecost God gave a new Law. He gave the Holy Spirit, who came down in purifying fire. The promise of which Jesus had told them before his ascension, 'you will be given power', was also fulfilled. The power operated immediately, enabling them to communicate with some at least of their hearers. Chapter 11 of Genesis describes how all men talked one language until the Lord, angry at their building the tower of Babel, 'confounded' it, that is, rendered them unintelligible to each other. Pentecost symbolizes the beginning of the reverse process: men begin to 'talk the same language'. The power also showed itself in Peter, who spoke to the crowd and converted many. These converts were the first-fruits of the harvest of the world that was waiting to be gathered in.

In the Christian year the events of this particular Pentecost are commemorated at Whitsuntide, seven weeks after Easter (which fell at the Feast of the Passover).

9. Parthians, etc. - This list of countries - a list rather unconvincingly

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put into the mouth of the members of the crowd – covers the Parthian Empire east of the Tigris, and the Roman Empire round the Eastern Mediterranean. It is representative, not exhaustive. It gives a good idea of how far the 'Jews of the Dispersion', as the Jews outside Judaea were called, had scattered. Those in Parthia were probably the descendants of those Jews who had been taken captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B.C. and not returned. The others were descendants of those who had followed along the routes opened up by Alexander the Great in his conquests, 330–323 B.C.

15. 'It is only nine in the morning.' – The Jews did not breakfast till after the hour of morning prayer, which was at nine.
16. 'The prophet Joel.' – The quotation is from Joel, 2. 28 f. Joel has been describing the misery of the Jews under a plague of locusts and other insects. He calls on the people to repent ('Rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God') and announces that the Lord will pity and forgive his people and restore plenty to the land. He then promises, in the words quoted by Peter, the coming of the Messiah ('the Day of the Lord'). Peter, like all the Apostolic writers in the New Testament, believed that the Second Coming of Christ would be soon. It would be heralded by fearful natural phenomena. Jesus the Messiah would return in power, judge the world, effect what was called the 'Restoration of the Universe', and institute the Messianic Age. Jesus himself seems in his human life to have had no clear idea when these things would happen, indeed he would seem to have had a wrong idea. Certainly some of his sayings to his disciples may well have been interpreted by them as indicating a speedy return, for example, 'In all truth I tell you, there are some of those that are standing here who shall not taste of death before seeing that the Kingdom of God has come in power.' (Mark 9. 1.) The first fifty years of the Church were years of painful realization that the Second Coming was far off.
22. 'Listen to me, men of Israel.' – The first concern of Peter and the Apostles in these early days was to convince the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah and that the many prophecies in the Old Testament came true in him. They regarded themselves primarily as 'witnesses' to the events of his life and his death.
23. 'You had him murdered ... by those wicked men.' – Jews would immediately catch the hidden reference to the Romans, the ruling power.
40. 'This perverted generation.' – Jesus had used much the same terms

(Matt. 16. 4 and elsewhere). 'By its rejection of the Messiah (cf. Luke 17. 25) it had incurred inevitable judgement (cf. Matt. 23. 36, Luke 11. 40 f.); the only way to escape the coming judgement was to accept the Good News' (F. F. Bruce).

42. 'Regular Breaking of Bread.' – This was the usual term for the beginning of a meal with a blessing. Jewish bread was baked in loaves of easily divisible portions; it needed no cutting, but was simply broken into portions and distributed. The term, however, acquired a special significance in the early Christian Church.

At the Last Supper, Jesus' last meal with his Apostles before his Crucifixion, he had talked long with them, expounding and instructing; he had broken bread and with a blessing given it to them with the words 'Take, eat; this is my body'; he had given them the wine cup with a blessing and the words, 'This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many', and they had sung a psalm. After the Ascension, some or all of these four features, the address, the breaking of bread, the giving of the cup, and the singing of psalms, would naturally form part of the disciples' meals. In addition the communal meals also became occasions for charity, for giving to the poor: the wealthy members provided meals for the poorer. The meals, which at first were called 'Breaking of Bread', soon came to acquire the name *Agapé*, or 'Love-Feast'. The word denoted both brotherly love and charity.

It will be seen that when the early Christians came together for their meals they came for three purposes: to worship, to give or receive charity, and to eat. Any institution that serves so diverse aims is bound to be open to dangers. In Chapter 6 we read of jealousy between the recipients of charity. From St Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians we gather that some of the Christians came to these meals with no thought but of food, and, worse still, of drink. There is no wonder that quite early on there was a move to separate the eating from the worship, and the term 'Eucharist' came to signify the latter. The *Agapé* did, however, continue for many centuries, though frequently questioned by Church authority, and finally the Trullan Council of A.D. 692 forbade its taking place in church buildings.

In the present century there is a move to restore it, for the sake of the fellowship it creates, in the form of the Parish Breakfast, held after early morning Holy Communion (Eucharist).

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3

1. John. – Probably the son of Zebedee, brother of James, Jesus' 'beloved disciple'.

1. The Temple. – (See p. 40.)

The huge enclosure in which the Temple stood was on the eastern hill of Jerusalem; worshippers had to 'go up' to it. Inside the outer walls was the Court of the Gentiles, open to all and used as a short cut and a market for money-changers and sellers of sacrificial animals. It was surrounded by cloisters or colonnades, and the eastern one was called after Solomon as it rested on foundations he had laid. From the north-west corner a flight of steps led up to the Fort of Antonia, which towered above the Court and was occupied by a Roman garrison (see Chapter 21). On higher ground towards the north of the Court was a further enclosure, here called 'the Temple'. It was approached by steps, and in the wall that surrounded it were nine entrance gates. One of these, probably the eastern one, was called the 'Beautiful Gate'. Notices forbidding Gentiles on pain of death to enter were placed at all the entrances. Through the Beautiful Gate was another court, called either the Court of Women, from the fact that it was the furthest that women were allowed to go, or the Treasury, from the chests for offerings that were placed in the colonnades that surrounded it. To the west of this Court were the Court of Israel, and then the Court of the Priests, in which stood the Altar of Burnt-Offerings and the Temple itself. Only those who had come to offer some special sacrifice would enter this last enclosure. The usual place of prayer was the Court of Women, and it was here that the incident described in this chapter took place.

12. f. 'Peter ... addressed them.' – When one considers that Peter here in the Temple enclosure, the heart of official Jewry, was proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah – the greatest blasphemy – and attacking the rulers for killing him, one must marvel at his courage. Peter himself begins by disclaiming the credit and giving the glory to God.

In the rest of the speech he is attempting to convince the Jews of the Messiahship of Jesus. To the unspoken question, 'If Jesus was the Messiah, why did he die ignominiously on a cross?' his answer is that Jesus was innocent, that he was crucified with God's foreknowledge, that the prophets had foretold the sufferings of the Messiah (a reference to Isaiah's 'Suffering Servant', Isa. 42, 49, 50,

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52-3), and that he had triumphed over death and was thus the source of life and author of salvation. To the further imaginary question, 'If Jesus was the Messiah, why did he not come in power and re-establish the kingdom of Israel and make a new heaven and a new earth?' Peter's answer is that these long-propheesied events could only come about if the Jews accepted the Messiah that God had sent them. God had told Moses that he would raise another prophet as mighty as he for Israel (Deut. 18. 15 f.; and Lev. 23. 29); God had made a covenant with Abraham that a descendant of his would bring in the new kingdom of God upon earth (Gen. 12. 3). Jesus, Peter told his listeners, is that second Moses, that descendant of Abraham, and the kingdom was theirs as the heirs – if only they would recognize Jesus as the Messiah.

4

1. The Commander of the Temple. – An official who ranked next to the High Priest in the religious hierarchy, and whose powers in the Temple appear to have resembled those of a Dean in an English Cathedral.
1. The Sadducees. – This sect, to which many of the priests belonged, were the aristocrats of Israel. They were strongly conservative in all their views. In religion they rejected as innovations the belief in spirits, good or bad, and in a resurrection and after-life. In politics they supported the Roman rule, were suspicious of extreme nationalists, and terrified of disturbances (like the present one), or riots or rebellions that might cause the Romans to interfere. They realized that such interference might bring to an end their position of privilege. Self-interest seems to have been their dominant characteristic. They were much disliked by all the rest of the Jews.

Their main opponents were the Pharisees. This sect were the intellectuals of Israel. They were the party of the people, from whom many of them had sprung. They devoted their lives to a study and interpretation of the Law of Moses and its accretions, and to the application of that Law to the problems of life. In their religious beliefs they differed from the Sadducees in believing in angels and demons and in the resurrection from the dead. Many of them were devout and peace-loving men, men like Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathaea, and the Rabbi Gamaliel. Others, however, were bigoted and self-righteous, and reduced life to the observance of a series of rules. It was this tendency in them that earned

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the stern comments of Christ. Politically they were the anti-Roman party, and their intolerance and hatred of everything non-Jewish fostered the fanaticism that eventually precipitated the rebellion against Rome that ended with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

5. The Sanhedrin. – This was the Senate, the highest Jewish court. It 'consisted of about seventy members drawn from three classes – (a) Rulers, (b) Elders or Presbyters, and (c) Scribes. These classes represented (a) the actual holders of office and of political power, (b) the leading men of influence, owing their position to their blood or wealth or religious dignity, and (c) the chief rabbis or teachers of the Law. The High Priest – at this time Joseph Caiaphas – was president of the Sanhedrin and he and his party ... practically formed the first class' (Rackham). The Sanhedrin was the Council that tried Jesus, and was later to try the Twelve, Stephen, and Paul.
6. Annas, the High Priest. – This post was really a combination of Archbishop and Prime Minister – in Israel politics was religion, and religion was, usually, politics. The office was confined to a few families. Annas had been High Priest from A.D. 6 to 15, and after that, right up to the time now described, retained a position of immense prestige. That is why he is here called 'High Priest', although the actual holder was Caiaphas, his son-in-law. Five of Annas' sons later held the office, including the Jonathan mentioned here. Caiaphas, of course, had been High Priest a few months earlier, when he had been largely responsible for putting the pressure on the Roman procurator Pilate that had made him order the crucifixion of Jesus. Jesus certainly regarded him as highly guilty, for he said to Pilate, 'You would have no authority whatever over me if Heaven had not empowered you. Which makes the man who put me in your hands all the more guilty.' (John 19. 11). Nothing is known of Alexander.
6. The Chief Priests. – Ex-High Priests or members of the few families who traditionally supplied the holder of that office.
11. '*The stone which, rejected by the builders, became the corner-stone.*' – A quotation from the prophetic Psalm 118. 22, used by Jesus himself of himself, at the end of the parable of the wicked husbandmen (Mark 12. 10). According to Isaiah (Isa. 28. 16) God had set the Messiah as a foundation-stone in Zion. Peter is maintaining that the Israelites had thrown it away when they killed Jesus, but now God by resurrecting Jesus was rescuing the stone from the rubbish and restoring it to a vital position – the top of

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a corner of the new Zion, the stone that binds the two walls together. , ,

'The Council were dumbfounded.' – Men of religion are often exasperated at having the Scriptures quoted against them.

'*Why did the Gentiles rage?*' – The opening words of Psalm 2. The psalm appears to describe the useless preparations for war on the part of the enemies of an imaginary and ideal King of Israel, who with God's help would establish dominion over the whole world.

Herod. – This was Herod Antipas, a son of Herod the Great, and ruler ('tetrarch') of Galilee and Peraea from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39. It was this Herod who had John the Baptist beheaded, who was called 'that fox' by Jesus, and who out of curiosity questioned the captive Jesus on the day of his crucifixion.

f. 'The community of the faithful. . . ' – A magnificent description of a kind of earthly Paradise – but Satan is not far away.

5

Ananias and Sapphira. – In the garden of Eden Satan had tempted Eve to sin. Among the chosen friends of Jesus Satan found one man whom he could persuade into betraying his Master. Now in the new community Satan discovers two people willing to do his work. The sin he tempted them to commit was hypocrisy. They pretended to be more generous than they really were. They wanted to gain the credit for generously giving all their money without giving it. In Peter's eyes this was an offence more against the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, than against men. They were 'tempting the Lord' – seeing how far they could go and get away with it. So Peter exerts his power, and one after the other they fall down dead.

Rackham's comment is: 'When the Lord gave the apostles the power of forgiving sins, that of retaining them necessarily accompanied it: with the power of loosing goes that of binding. And the apostles did not shrink from their responsibility. Thus St Paul used his "authority for casting down" when he struck Elymas with blindness and excommunicated the offender against the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 5. 5). Peter exercised the same authority in the judgement of Simon Magus (8. 20–23). Here, however, no sentence was uttered. Ananias suddenly fell down dead. It was the immediate result of his conviction by the Holy Spirit in his own conscience. . . .

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After an interval of three hours Sapphira came in and the same scene was repeated. This time, however, Sapphira uttered the lie in word, and St Peter in answer foretold her fate. Most commentators adopt a similar view and approve Peter's action. I find myself in disagreement.

In the first place it seems quite clear from the narrative that Peter was exerting a power of destruction, at least in the second episode. It is just possible to attribute Ananias' death to natural causes, and maintain that he fell down dead from heart failure. But in the case of Sapphira Peter was clearly willing her death. A woman can scarcely receive a greater shock than the sudden announcement of her husband's death. The news for Sapphira was preceded by public exposure of her dishonesty and followed by the blunt statement that she was going to die too. We receive a terrible picture of Peter, with his immense authority and prestige, and now in his grimmest mood, standing over the trembling woman. 'Hark, the footsteps of those who have buried your husband are at the door. They are going to carry YOU out.' Quite clearly he is trying to strike her dead, and he succeeds. Equally clearly he is committing an act that would be called a sin in most codes, certainly in the code of Jesus. Jesus did not strike Judas dead at the Last Supper. Can one imagine him doing anything like this?

The trouble is that he once did do something which in its externals did resemble it, and which Peter witnessed. On the last Monday of his life he said to the fig-tree which, OUT of the fig season, had no fruit on it, 'May no one ever eat any fruit of yours again' (Mark 11. 14). The next day the tree was dead, 'withered root and branch'. Peter remembered, and said to him: 'Sec, Rabbi! The fig-tree that you cursed is withered.' Jesus must certainly have had some purpose and motive other than anger. His disciples seem to have misinterpreted his purpose. They learnt a lesson, but it was the wrong one. And now we find Peter taking it upon himself to blast a human soul out of this world. Too frequently the Church has followed the example of Peter and not of his Master.

'Terror struck all the church.' – This is the first time that the word 'church' occurs in the 'Acts', although Jesus had twice used it of his followers. It is clear that the regular term had not yet been settled, for we find all the following phrases: the Way, this Faith, this Life, this Salvation. Similarly the followers of Christ are variously called: the disciples, the saved, the believers, the faithful, the brothers, those who call upon the Name, and the saints, before,

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- as Rackham says, 'the name taken from "the Name" secured a final and complete triumph, viz. the Christians'.
9. 'An Angel of the Lord.' – There are frequent references to angels in the Old Testament and the Gospels, and in the 'Acts' there are five. The meaning of the word seems to vary considerably. In this instance it probably does not mean an angel in the modern meaning of the word, but indicates a person acting as an agent or messenger of God. (The Greek word *aggelos* means 'messenger'.) In 12. 23 the term 'angel of the Lord', used of Herod's slayer, is perhaps a figurative expression like our 'Messenger of Death'. The angel who prompts Philip (8. 26) seems merely to represent the internal prompting of the spirit. The angel whom Stephen describes in Moses' dream (7. 30) may similarly represent an inner movement of the spirit, and may be compared with the angel who appears to Joseph, the husband of Mary, and urges him to fly to Egypt (Matt. 2. 13). Finally there is the angel who wakes Peter up when he is in prison, by touching him on the side, and who then leads him out to safety (12). This angel appears to be an angel in the modern sense of the word, a spiritual being manifesting itself to mortal senses. He has the substantiality of the Angel Gabriel who came to Mary at the Annunciation, and of the angel who appeared to the shepherds at the birth of Christ. Among the Jews at this time the Pharisees believed in the reality of angels – and devils; the Sadducees resembled the modern age in not doing so.
 28. "'This name"... the death of this man.' – The High Priest cannot bring himself to mention the detested word Jesus.
 30. 'You *hung him on a tree*.' – The words describe the Jewish method of execution laid down in the Law (Deut. 21. 22).
 34. Gamaliel. – The most famous Rabbi among the Pharisees; Paul was trained in his school. The policy he advises is one of expediency not principle. Any means of thwarting the Sadducees, however, was to be seized.
 36. Theudas. – We know nothing of Theudas, though the Jewish historian Josephus mentions a similar rising of another Theudas at a date about ten years after this speech was delivered.
 37. Judas of Galilee. – When in A.D. 6 Augustus added Judaea to the imperial province of Syria, the legate of Syria, Quirinius, was instructed to make a census of the population, the census being the preliminary to the imposition of taxes. (The census mentioned in Luke 2. 1 at the time of the birth of Christ was another and earlier census.) The Judas here mentioned led a revolt against this move from Rome on the grounds that Israel owed allegiance to one

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King only – God – and should not pay tribute to any other king. His revolt was put down, but it led to the foundation of the fanatical party of Zealots, and so Gamaliel was wrong in implying that the movement ended with Judas' death. Ironically enough it could have been said of Jesus with equal truth that 'he too was crushed, and all of his followers were scattered' – for a while.

6

- I. 'Complaints arose.' – At the end of Chapter 2 and Chapter 4 Luke describes the communal way of life among the disciples. The rich gave their money into a central pool, from which the individual needs of the poor were met. A high proportion of the poor would have been widows. Community life, however, like other ways of life, is open to human frailty and sin. The incident of Ananias and Sapphira illustrated the temptations that beset the rich, the givers. The present incident illustrates the temptations that can beset the poor, the recipients. The distribution of charity is always a difficult and invidious matter, and the Apostles, 'the Twelve', who as leaders evidently supervised it, found that one group began to grumble. Consequently they suggested the election of 'the Seven', who would take on the task. What we here see is the early church making changes in its organization, creating new officials, to meet the demands of a changing situation. It is noteworthy that the Greek word here translated as 'distribution of alms', *diakonia*, is the origin of our word 'deacon', a word that denotes some kind of church official or minister in many different Christian churches.
- I. 'Hellenistic Jews ... native Jews.' – The first of these terms, *Hellenistai*, is used with varying shades of meaning in the 'Acts', but here it is reasonably certain that it and the second term, *Hebraioi*, denote two fairly distinct groups of Jewish disciples: (a) The Jews of the Dispersion, or their descendants, Jews who had lived abroad or whose parents had, Jews who normally spoke Greek rather than Aramaic and who had come in contact with the wider culture of the Roman Empire with its strong Greek influences. (b) The Jews of Judaea, especially Jerusalem, whose normal language was Aramaic and not Greek, who had not come under the influence of Hellenistic culture, and whose attitude in matters religious and political was strongly anti-Gentile. The conventional translation of (a) as 'Greek-speaking' is inadequate. After all, all the Jews

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- COULD speak Greek. It was the language in which they would have talked to foreigners. Jesus must have talked Greek to the Roman centurion and to the Roman procurator Pilate.
2. 'Brothers.' – I have translated the word *adelphoi* as 'Brothers' or 'Brotherhood' when it applies to the new community, and as 'Brethren' when it applies to the Jews.
 5. 'Stephen ... Nicolas.' – Evidently the community were resolved that the interests of the Hellenistic poor should be fully safeguarded, for all the seven men they elected had Greek names. They were not necessarily all Hellenists, for the Apostle Andrew had a Greek name yet was a 'Hebrew' through and through.
 6. 'The laying-on of hands.' – In Old Testament times this was the usual way of performing a blessing. One thinks particularly of the formal blessing of Jacob and Esau by their father Isaac, and the immense power that was supposed to reside in the act. It is natural that the new community should employ this symbolical act for a ceremony in which those who had received the power of the Holy Spirit were passing on that power to others. The laying-on of hands is still used at such ceremonies in the Christian Church as the consecration of Bishops and confirmation.
 9. 'Synagogue of Roman Freedmen.' – 'Freedmen', *libertini*, was the name given to those slaves whom the Romans in any part of the Empire had set free, and to their descendants. It is understandable that these men should establish a common synagogue in Jerusalem, for they must have had many interests in common. The Greek of this passage, however, is obscure, and there have been commentators who have interpreted it as referring to every number of synagogues from one to five.
 11. 'Blaspheming against Moses and God.' – The charge against Stephen, as expanded formally at his trial before the Sanhedrin, was speaking not only against Moses as a man but against the Law of Moses, and the Temple in which that Law was expounded; in fact, attacking the institutional religion of Judaism, and 'the whole Jewish system of civil and religious life' (Ramsay). It was also stated in the charge that he had quoted similar words of Jesus. Actually Jesus had said, referring to his own body: 'Pull down the Temple and in three days I will raise it up' (John 2. 19), but his hearers had misinterpreted him as referring to the Temple. He had also predicted the destruction of the Temple (Mark 13. 2), and these statements were used in evidence against him at his trial (Mark 14. 58). Stephen now is accused of similar offences. The accusations against him, if we may judge from his own words given in

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the next chapter, are only half true; the witnesses were in fact 'false witnesses'. There is certainly no blasphemy against God; Stephen in his summary of Jewish history vindicates God's ways and purposes. There is certainly no blasphemy against Moses the man; Stephen treats him as a prototype saint, a forerunner of Christ, righteous but rejected by his people. There is not even an attack (such as we find Jesus making) on the Law of Moses; Stephen describes the Law as 'received ... at the hands of angels'. There is, however, a kind of attack on the Temple, for Stephen voices beliefs which clearly carry a threat to the continued existence of the Temple. One of his main themes is that God does not need the Temple, or any temple, for his worship.

Stephen's teaching is in fact well in advance of Peter's and half-way to Paul's. His fellow Hellenists in the Christian community were the first to see where his beliefs were leading – but the Sanhedrin were not slow to follow.

7

2. "Brethren, fathers," Stephen answered.' – No translation could render this long speech of Stephen's intelligible to the modern reader. What is needed is paraphrase interlarded with frequent insertions. That is not the translator's task. The speech would, however, have been immediately intelligible to Stephen's audience, and was, for they killed him for it.

The main difficulties that a modern reader finds are first the numerous quotations of words, phrases, and whole passages from the Old Testament with which he may not be familiar. I have given the sources of the main references in additional notes below.

The second difficulty for the modern reader is that, even when he has accepted the Jewish idea of PROVING something in the present from a similar occurrence in the past, he still cannot tell from the speech what Stephen is trying to prove. He will find it incomprehensible that Stephen apparently makes no reference to Jesus Christ until nearly the last sentence – 'the Righteous One'.

Some commentary, then, is essential.

The points that Stephen was making were:

(1) Joseph and Moses were prototypes of Jesus: like him they were rejected by their unappreciative people, yet – like him – proved the saviours of their people.

(2) The Temple and the Holy Land (Canaan, Judaea) were not

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essential in the worship of God. God had guided his people in many foreign or enemy lands (Mesopotamia, Egypt, Samaria) long before the Temple was built. The first construction of a shrine God had ordered was a tent (tabernacle), and a movable one at that. It was not till Solomon's time that the Temple was built.

The points under (2) need no further elucidation. Under (1) the detailed points of comparison between Jesus and Joseph and Moses are:

(a) Like Joseph, Jesus was sold (to the High Priests), delivered over to the Gentiles (the Romans) from envy, but delivered by God and raised to the highest position in a household (the house of God).

(b) Like Moses, Jesus was born in due season, at a time when his people were oppressed by a foreign power (Rome), was cast out from his home (the flight to Egypt), increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man (Luke 2. 52), went at his full maturity to preach to his people (in Nazareth), but was slighted or rejected and had to leave his district, heard the voice of God (the Transfiguration), performed miracles and wonders for his people, mediated between God and men, handing on to men the Laws of Life, and was finally rejected by his people who were bent on worshipping not the true God as revealed by God's messenger but what their own selfish desires prompted (for which God would punish them by turning his back on them and leaving them to continue with their corrupt practices).

3. '*Leave thy country.*' – The story of Abraham is to be found in Gen. 12. 1 onwards.
8. '*The covenant of the circumcision.*' – Gen. 17. 10. God told Abraham that he would be the God of him and his descendants, and give them the land of Canaan. To mark this agreement or covenant he ordered that he and his descendants should be circumcised.
8. '*Founders of the Twelve Tribes.*' – For the story of Joseph see Gen. 37 onwards.
16. Shechem. – A place in Samaria. 'The mention of a place now belonging to the schismatic Samaritans (cf. John 4. 5 f., 12) was little calculated to conciliate the audience' (Bruce).
17. '*The people of Israel grew and multiplied.*' – For the story of Moses see Exodus 1 onwards.
42. 'The Book of the Prophets says: "*Have you offered slain beasts and sacrifices unto me?*"' – The twelve (minor) prophets comprise one book in the Hebrew Bible. The actual quotation is from Amos 5.

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- 25-27. The Hebrew text reads, 'beyond Damascus', and Amos was in fact warning the Israelites of the possibility of being deported by the Assyrian King. The Greek Septuagint text, which Stephen follows, reads, 'beyond Babylon', thus transferring the warning from the eighth century to the sixth century B.C.
44. '*The tabernacle of the testimony.*' – The tent which the Israelites carried at the head of their column when on the move. It contained a shrine, the Ark, in which were kept the tablets on which the Law was written.
46. '*Find an abode for the God of Jacob.*' – Psalm 132. 5. God's favourite, David, was not allowed to build a Temple; his son Solomon, who eventually displeased God, was the builder of the Temple.
49. '*The heaven is MY throne.*' – Isa. 66. 1.
51. 'O you stubborn people, hard of heart and hard of hearing.' – The Authorized Version translation is 'Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears'. Stephen may never have known Jesus, but he loved him all the same. This magnificent tirade against the Sanhedrin may have been partly prompted by the memory that they had only recently been responsible for the judicial murder of Jesus in the horrible manner of the time. They, and not Moses, God, or the Temple, were the main object of his attack, and they knew it. They found the truth excruciating and intolerable: 'they gnashed their teeth' and 'stopped their ears', and then launched themselves on him.

It is not clear whether this was a simple case of lynching or an official punishment. In either case the Sanhedrin were exceeding the powers granted them by the Romans. Perhaps it was a bit of each. The fury of the Council members permitted the High Priest no time to ask for and deliver a verdict, and he must have taken their uncontrollable anger as a sufficient indication of their views. By the time the mob had arrived at the place of execution they had cooled down sufficiently to carry out the killing in the regular way, stoning. The routine (see Deut. 17. 6-7) was for one of the witnesses whose evidence at the trial had secured a conviction to throw the prisoner over the precipice and roll a boulder after him. If this failed to kill him, the other witnesses in turn, and if necessary the bystanders, similarly rolled their stones.

59. 'Receive my spirit ... Do not punish them for this sin.' – The last two utterances of the second martyr are echoes of the words of the first on the cross.

'Among those who approved.' – It is uncertain whether the Greek means that Saul actually voted for the death of Stephen as a member of the Sanhedrin, or merely mentally agreed with the verdict. As there seems to have been no proper vote the second alternative is probably right.

1. 'All except the Apostles fled.' – It is probable that the persecution was directed mainly against the Hellenists, who had been the cause of the conflict. The Apostles, being native-born Jews, were thus comparatively safe. The Greek word here translated 'fled' literally means 'were scattered', 'were dispersed', and is the same word used in the phrase 'Jews of the Dispersion'. The implication may be that the new church, like the old Israel, is to have its 'Dispersion'.
2. 'Stephen was buried by some devout men.' – The Law permitted the burial of an executed criminal, but disallowed the traditional procession of 'weepers'. These men braved the Law. We are reminded of Joseph of Arimathea, who buried Jesus.
5. 'Philip travelled down to a city in Samaria.' – This is Philip the Hellenist, one of 'the Seven'. His originality is shown firstly by his preaching to the detested Samaritans, and secondly by his baptizing a eunuch. The 'Law' forbade eunuchs to practise Judaism (Deut. 23. 1), but Isaiah disagreed (Isa. 56. 3–5). Presumably this was one of the points that the Doctors of Law would have enjoyed arguing.
9. 'Simon, who practised magic ... he was "The Mighty One of God".' – He was one of the charlatans who always hang on the occult fringe of religion, and sometimes get in touch with dubious spiritual powers. The Greek may imply that he claimed to be the Messiah. From the story told in St John's Gospel (Chap. 4) of Jesus and the Samaritan woman we learn that many Samaritans lived in expectation of the Messiah's coming, and that they were a naïve and credulous people.
18. 'Simon ... offered them money.' – This act of Simon's has given us the word 'simony', the obtaining, or granting, of positions in the Church for money. It is important to realize that this sin, like that of Ananias and Sapphira, was committed within the Church, as Simon had been baptized. Peter is not so savage with Simon as with them. He does, however, 'damn' him, but adds the suggestion that repentance and prayer may win the Lord's forgiveness. Simon's response is interesting. Being credulous, he immediately

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- believes that Peter's threat of damnation will come true. But he lacks the will or the courage to trust in his own prayers, and beseeches Peter for his. Luke is silent about the outcome. Not so legend. Simon became established as the first heretic of Christianity and many stories circulated of further encounters between him and Peter in other places, including Rome.
26. *Gaza-in-the-Desert*: or *Old Gaza*. – Gaza, the Philistine city, two miles inland, had been destroyed in 96 B.C., and a new city, *New or Maritime Gaza*, had been built on the coast in 57 B.C. The Ethiopian eunuch was on his way home on the caravan route to Egypt that must now have by-passed the new city as it passed through the old.
30. 'Are you really taking in what you are reading out?' – There is a pun in the Greek, and the venerable Jerome found a Latin pun for his Vulgate version ('*Intellegis quae legis?*') There seems to have been a gaiety about Philip, although he did later have four unmarried daughters who were prophetesses.
32. '*He was led as a sheep to the slaughter.*' – This quotation is from the magnificent chapter in Isaiah about the Suffering Servant (Chap. 53). Our Lord had first applied it to himself – 'For I tell you that the Scripture which says, "*They numbered him among the criminals*", is fulfilled in me' (Luke 22. 37). The New Testament writers naturally follow, and identify Jesus with the Suffering Servant. The latter part of the prophecy still needs someone to explain it, as the Hebrew version and the Greek version (which the Ethiopian would have been reading) differ from one another and are both almost unintelligible. The version given here is frankly a paraphrase of a possible interpretation.
37. The absence of a verse from the text, as here, means that it is not found in the best Greek MSS.
40. *Azotus*. – Old Testament Ashdod, a Philistine city, half way between Gaza and Joppa, now a ruin in the sand dunes.
40. *Caesarea*. – At this time it was the Roman capital of the Province of Judaea, and the official place of residence of the Roman governors. It had been built in the previous century by Herod the Great, and named after the Emperor Augustus. It had a magnificent artificial harbour. It is probable that Philip settled here, for many years later Paul and Luke stayed with him on their way through Caesarea. Luke probably got the graphic story of the Ethiopian eunuch from him during this stay. Little now remains of this once splendid city. H. V. Morton records that there are a few houses, a mosque or two, and huddled walls.

9

1. 'Saul meanwhile, still with threats on his lips.' – Saul imagined that his task of crushing the church at Jerusalem was completed, and with typical thoroughness – and ruthlessness – decided to pursue some of those who had eluded him to their place of refuge, Damascus.
2. Damascus. – Damascus was, and is, a flourishing garden city lying amid bare hills on the main caravan route from Egypt and the sea to the east. In Old Testament times it had been the capital of Syria, but had been superseded by a new capital on the coast, Antioch. It was safeguarded from eclipse by its important geographical position; it still flourishes, whereas Antioch is a wilderness. It was only 170 miles as the crow flies from Jerusalem, and had a vigorous Jewish community. Many of these Jews may have heard, or heard about, Jesus, and perhaps some of them, including Ananias, had been followers of his. They would not of course have broken with the Jewish Church, but merely formed a more religiously-minded group within it, and followed the new 'Way'. The word used by Ananias of the Christians in Jerusalem is, literally, 'the saints', here translated the 'followers', because of the inalienable associations of the word 'saint'. Damascus would have been a natural place of refuge for the disciples who fled from Jerusalem on the persecution that followed Stephen's death.
4. Saul. – The Lord was speaking Aramaic (cf. 26. 14). Bruce quotes St Augustine's penetrating comment – 'The head was crying out on behalf of the limbs.'
5. 'Who are you, sir?' – The Revised Version has 'Who art thou, Lord?' The Greek word *kurios* means 'Lord' in both the Old Testament and New Testament senses, and is also the title of polite address. The correct translation here must be the one adopted, as if Saul had known it was the Lord he would not have asked him who he was.
7. 'They heard Saul speaking but could see no one else.' – The Greek says literally, 'They heard the voice but ...' The story of Paul's conversion is told three times in the 'Acts' – here by Luke as part of the narrative; in 22 by Paul himself in a speech to the enraged crowd in the Temple; and in 26, again by Paul, in his speech to Festus and King Agrippa. There are several discrepancies between the three versions, as indeed one would expect in an often-told tale, especially one told to different audiences. One of the differ-

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- ences is that in 22 Paul says that his companions did not hear the voice (of the Lord), whereas in this account, if one translates 'the voice' in the natural way as referring to the Lord's, they did. The translation here adopted irons out the difference. Perhaps it would be better just to accept the difference.
9. 'He ate and drank nothing.' – No wonder. The physical shock of the dazzling vision, the wreck of his plans, his humiliating entry into Damascus, and anxiety about his equivocal position, combined to prostrate him. Rackham writes, in a passage that is typical of his understanding, 'The conviction of his sin ... is followed by death, death to the old life. He is crucified with Christ, and the three days of darkness are like the three days in the tomb. But on the third day with Christ he rises from the dead in baptism; after this he is filled with the Holy Ghost – his Pentecost.'
 18. 'The scales fell from Saul's eyes.' – The word describes some flaky substance.
 19. 'Saul later stayed some time with the disciples in Damascus.' – A literal translation would read, 'And it came to pass that he stayed ...' This phrase usually implies an interval of time, a fact which justifies my translation. For there was an interval between Saul's conversion and his preaching in Damascus, an interval of something over two years. We learn this from Paul's Letter to the Galatians (1. 16 f.), where he writes: 'My first thought was not to hold any consultations with any human creature; I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who had been apostles longer than myself; no, I went off into Arabia, and when I came back, it was to Damascus. Then, when three years had passed, I did go up to Jerusalem' (R. A. Knox's translation). Paul obviously needed time to rethink his whole philosophy, and so retired to the seclusion of Arabia. From his meditations he returned to Damascus with the fully developed and advanced doctrine of Jesus as 'The Son of God'.
 24. 'They were keeping a watch night and day at the city gates.' – The picture can be filled in from Paul's second Letter to the Corinthians (11. 32). In his stay in Arabia Paul had probably roused the hostility of King Aretas, the powerful sheikh who had established himself there. Aretas' representative in Damascus (the 'ethnarch') joined the Jews in a plot to kill Paul, and gained permission from the Roman authorities to set a watch at the gates of the city to prevent his escape.
 25. 'Let him down in a basket.' – The humiliation of being treated like a bundle of animals' skins or a bale of wool rankled with Paul for a life-time (II Cor. 11. 29–32).

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27. 'Barnabas took him to the Apostles.' – According to 'Galatians', where Paul is trying to establish that his teaching came direct from Jesus Christ and not from men, Paul saw only Peter, with whom he stayed a fortnight, and James, the Lord's brother. (Gal. 1.)
30. Tarsus. – Paul's native city, the capital of Cilicia, a great commercial town, and second only to Athens and Alexandria as a centre of learning. Its engineers had made the knife-like cutting, called the Cilician Gates, in the formidable Taurus Range and the eighty-mile-long road through the Range, and all traffic between Asia Minor and Syria had to pass through Tarsus. Invasion, war, and inertia have now reduced Tarsus to 'a dusty, malarial little town crouched in a swamp' (H. V. Morton). Its magnificent inland lake and harbour have silted up, and the ancient city is fifteen feet below the modern one.
32. Lydda. – A large village on the road between Jerusalem and Joppa. It lay at the edge of the plain of Sharon, famous for its flowers ('I am the rose of Sharon', Song of Solomon 2. 1). Only twelve miles away was Joppa, the modern Jaffa, the main port of Palestine.
34. 'Have something to eat.' – The Authorized Version has 'make thy bed'. The Greek word can refer to the making of a bed or the preparation of the kind of couch used for reclining on at meals.
35. 'Many people in Lydda and Sharon saw him and were converted to the Lord.' – The Greek has, literally, 'All the people...' This seems conclusive proof that the Greek word could at this time mean merely 'many'. Luke may sometimes be vague about numbers, but he is never silly.
36. Tabitha. – I find it impossible to believe that Peter restored Tabitha from death to life. The account seems an account of a simple miracle of healing exaggerated into a resemblance of the later accounts of Jesus' 'raising of Jairus' daughter'. The earliest account of that 'raising' (Mark's) reads like a miracle of healing; whatever the relatives and friends of the girl thought had happened, Jesus himself said, 'The girl is not dead, but asleep' (Mark 5. 39). By the time the story reached Luke it had all the ring of a miracle of 'raising', though even in Luke Jesus says she is not dead (Luke 8. 52). It is of course true that Jesus did once restore a dead man to life – Lazarus – and he must have had his own good reasons, even though we may not understand them. But can one believe that Peter restored Tabitha to life? Does God ever grant one of his creatures the power to erase the 'Finis' he has written

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on others? What was needed in Tabitha's case was a doctor, or at least a man of sense. There were too many weeping widows there.

IO

1. 'A centurion of the Italian Cohort.' – In the Roman Army a Cohort consisted of about 600 men (resembling a Battalion in the British Army), and the Commanding Officer was a Tribune. There were ten cohorts in one Legion (resembling our Division). Each cohort was composed of six 'centuries', or 'hundreds of men' (resembling our Companies), which were commanded by centurions. These had a position between our N.C.O.s and officers. They resembled N.C.O.s in that they rose from the ranks and did not normally obtain a commission. They resembled officers – of about the rank of Captain – in that they were in complete charge of their companies. From the context of this chapter it is clear that Cornelius, with his servants and orderlies, was more than a Sergeant or Sergeant Major. He has the status of an officer of a ruling power stationed in the Empire. He was well-established in Caesarea, with his family and circle of friends, and was well-known and respected by the Jews.

In the New Testament centurions appear in a better light than any other group or class. One of them astounded Our Lord by his faith ('Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed', Matt. 8. 8). Another one, in charge of the crucifixion, was awed into the confession that Jesus was 'a son of God'. And another one, in charge of the prisoners on their way to Rome, showed great consideration to Paul (27).

2. 'A pious observer of Jewish religious customs.' – Literally, 'one that fears God'. The Greek term is really a technical one describing those Gentiles who became so interested in Jewish religion that they observed the Jewish law of the Sabbath and the food-laws, attended a synagogue and worshipped one God. They differed from full converts or proselytes only in that they had not undergone circumcision.
6. 'Simon the tanner.' – This trade was held unclean, 'untouchable', by the Jews as it involved contact with skins of animals considered unclean. It may be that God guided Peter to lodge with a tanner for a reason – to begin the process of breaking down his prejudices.
10. 'Peter ... fell into a trance.' – God was here using the ordinary machinery of dreams to convey a message, if one can so speak

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without irreverence. This dream-vision might well find its way into a modern psychological text-book to illustrate the principles on which dreams work:

(1) Objects of everyday experience to the dreamer are incorporated into his dream and there used as symbols.

(2) The story of the dream often has a connexion with some recent subject of the dreamer's thoughts.

(3) The series of pictures presented to the inner eye of the sleeper may express an idea, 'have a meaning'. But the actual message for real life that the subconscious mind wishes to convey may be something different from the meaning in the dream.

In Peter's dream the everyday objects are animals, reptiles, birds, and a cloth. All of the creatures listed would certainly have been found in a Mediterranean seaport, and perhaps may have been visible from the flat roof of a house on the seashore. The cloth may have been suggested by the awning that would almost certainly have been up to protect Peter from the midday sun. The subject of Peter's thoughts while he was trying to pray was food. The meaning of the dream IN THE DREAM is that Peter should discard the Jewish food-laws, which regarded all animals except ruminants with cloven hooves as unfit for food. The actual message is that Peter should discard the Jewish race-laws, which regarded Gentiles, even those who followed the Jewish religion, as unfit to share the full blessing of God. By verse 28 Peter has correctly interpreted the message of his dream. Like modern psychologists, the Jews had the sense to take dreams seriously.

14. "No, Lord," Peter answered.' – Peter had always been argumentative with his Lord. (See Matt. 16. 22, and John 13. 8.)
15. 'Do not call untouchable what God has declared pure.' – In Genesis, after God had created the fish, birds, and beasts on the fifth and sixth days he 'saw that it was good'. Jesus (Mark 7. 18, 19) also said, "'Do you not see that nothing that enters a man from outside can defile him, since it enters his stomach, not his heart, and passes out in the privy?" He thus pronounced every kind of food ceremonially pure.'
24. 'On the following day they arrived in Caesarea.' – Cornelius' men had covered the thirty miles from Caesarea to Joppa between early morning and noon, presumably travelling on horseback. Peter's party, presumably on foot, had to spend a night on the way.
34. 'God has no favourites.' – Deut. 10. 17. In his speech to the Gentiles Peter makes the following main points:
 - (1) The revelation which Jews and Gentiles interested in the

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Jewish religion had long been awaiting has come – God has sent his Word.

(2) The Word is Jesus, a man, but nevertheless the Lord of all Creation.

(3) He led a life of service to others, fighting the powers of evil.

(4) Eventually he was crucified, but he has risen from the dead and we saw him.

(5) He commissioned us to preach to the Jews that he would be the Judge of all men.

(6) The message can now be carried to the Gentiles, as the Prophets foretold, and everyone can lead the new life, whatever his nationality.

44. 'The Holy Spirit descended.' – This occasion has been called the Pentecost of the Gentiles. The descent of the Spirit is followed by ecstatic utterances in praise of God, as was his first descent at the first Pentecost.

II

2. 'The stricter Jews attacked him.' – Peter had expected this, for he had taken the six Christian Jews of Joppa with him to Jerusalem as witnesses (v. 12). He had, as he well knew, offended against a convention so strong as to have the force of a taboo. To understand the horror of his fellow-apostles and followers in Jerusalem one has to think of a modern parallel, e.g. the effect on his friends and Party of the marriage of a South African Nationalist leader to a Bantu girl. Peter's explanation silenced his critics, but only for a time; it certainly did not win them round to the acceptance of full intercourse with Gentiles. Fourteen years later a party among the Jerusalem Christians were still insisting on circumcision for Gentile converts (Chap. 15). Peter himself, as we learn from Paul's Letter to the Galatians (2. 11 f.), after first eating with Gentile Christians in Antioch later refrained from doing so. It was left for Paul, who on that occasion openly attacked Peter for his action, finally to break down the barriers. But Peter first showed him the way.
16. 'I remembered what the Lord told us.' – See 1. 5.
19. Antioch. – This city had been founded in 300 B.C. on a site where the river Orontes leaves the mountains and begins its flow over the rich plains to the sea. It was at this time the capital of the Roman Province of Syria, and was also important commercially, as it lay on the trade route from the west to Arabia and Meso-

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potamia. Its seaport was Seleucia, fifteen miles distant. It was noted for its immorality. Stirling writes of it: 'Roman Emperors, Greek poets, Chaldaean astrologers, moved amid the mixed multitude, thronging its fountains and groves, and filling its streets with gaiety and vice.' This busy conflux of East and West, Jew and Gentile, now became the centre of missionary Christianity, and long remained so. Saint Ignatius and Saint Chrysostom both came from Antioch.

22. 'However, the news of this activity reached the church in Jerusalem.' – As when they heard about Peter's baptism of Cornelius the church in Jerusalem was deeply disturbed. The Greek fringe of the church in Antioch obviously created problems – Could these people receive the Holy Spirit? Should they be circumcised? Should the Jewish Christians eat with them in their homes? So the Jerusalem authorities sent someone to investigate. They chose Barnabas, who had already shown that he was a peacemaker by reconciling the newly-converted Paul to the Apostles. To his relief, and perhaps to his surprise, Barnabas found that all was well. It may be that the pun which Luke uses here – in the Greek 'overjoyed' puns with 'grace' – expresses relief. The advice of Barnabas, as we learn from Chapter 15 and Paul's Letter to the Galatians, was that Jews and Gentiles should put their worship of the Lord first, that the Gentiles need not be circumcised, and that the Jews might eat with the Gentiles.
26. 'The disciples were first called "Christians".' – The Greek word *Christos* was very near another Greek word *chrestos*, a word meaning 'good, honest fellow', often with a slightly patronizing or contemptuous significance. The population of Antioch heard much of someone called 'Christos' from a mixed group of 'honest citizens', and nicknamed them 'Christians' with the double meaning. The members of the new church soon took the derogatory term to their hearts, as did the 'Quakers' and the 'Old Contemptibles' theirs.
27. 'Prophets.' – Prophets ranked next to Apostles in the Church.
28. 'Widespread famine over the whole Roman Empire.' – An exaggeration, as Antioch itself was part of the Empire. However, in the reign of Claudius, A.D. 41–54, there were sporadic outbreaks of famine in many places. The historian Josephus records one in Judaea between 44 and 48. Barnabas' and Paul's famine relief mission to Jerusalem, referred to in the last verse of this chapter, probably took place in A.D. 46. In the hotly contested conflict between scholars as to which of Paul's visits to Jerusalem cor-

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responds to which of the visits mentioned in his Letter to the Galatians, I have in these Notes taken the view that the visit of Acts 9. 28 (when Barnabas acts as intermediary) is the visit of Gal. 1. 18; the visit of Acts 11. 30 (described in this chapter) is not mentioned in the Letter; and the visit of Acts 15. 2 f. (the Council of Jerusalem) is that of Gal. 2. 1 f.

I 2

1. King Herod. – This is Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great. He was the spoilt darling of a decadent line, brought up in Rome to a life of luxury as an intimate of the imperial family. By carefully playing his cards he acquired almost as much territory as his grandfather, but at first ruled as an absentee. When he did take up residence he assiduously curried favour with the Jews. In this chapter he is revealed as having the obsequiousness, the petulance, and the self-importance of the petty potentate.
2. ‘He had John’s brother James beheaded.’ – Our Lord had predicted to these two sons of Zebedee: ‘You shall drink the cup that I drink and suffer the baptism I suffer’ (Mark 10. 39), and the prediction here comes true for James.
12. ‘The house of Mary, John Mark’s mother.’ – This house has already been mentioned, in the note on Chapter 1, as the meeting-place of the disciples in Jerusalem. It was obviously the house of a well-to-do family, as it possessed a room large enough for a considerable gathering, and a courtyard. There was also a maid. John Mark was probably present on the occasion here described, and it is possible that Luke heard all the graphic details from him.
15. ‘It must be his angel.’ – The belief in guardian angels seems common at the time. Our Lord said, ‘Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven’ (Matt. 18. 10).
17. ‘“Tell James and the Brotherhood about this,” he ended, and left them and went to another place.’ – This James was the brother of our Lord. He figures largely in the remaining chapters as the leader of the Church in Jerusalem. The ‘place’ to which Peter fled for safety can only be conjectured; the suppression of the name admirably conveys the atmosphere of secrecy of the time. The place may have been Antioch. Roman Catholic commentators hold, without satisfactory evidence, that it was Rome.

Notes

19. 'Herod ... had the guard tried and executed.' – The usual fate of careless gaolers in those days (cf. 16. 27).
21. 'On the appointed day.' – The Jewish historian Josephus gives a fuller account of the death of Herod. He says the occasion was a festival in honour of the Emperor, in A.D. 44. Herod came into the theatre in a robe made entirely of silver, and the populace, dazzled by the sun's reflection on it, cried out that he was a god. Herod failed to correct their mistake. Soon after he saw an owl, a bird of ill omen, on a rope of his tent, and was seized by violent pains, and died five days later. The Greek word used to describe his illness means, when literally translated, 'he was eaten by worms'. This was a traditional rather than a medical term, and probably covered many of the internal diseases that modern medicine can now distinguish.
24. 'The Word of God spread far and wide.' – On Herod's death Palestine was again made a Roman province, and Roman peace prevailed.

I 3

With this chapter the account of Paul's great missionary journeys begins. The 'work' mentioned in the prophetic utterance in verse 2 is the founding of the Gentile churches. It is noteworthy that Paul was commissioned not by the church of Jerusalem but by the church of Antioch.

- I. Simeon Niger. – Probably an African.
- I. Lucius of Cyrene. – Perhaps one of the 'men of Cyrene' mentioned in 11. 20.
- I. 'Manaen, the childhood companion of Herod.' – This Manaen may have been the son of a Manaen who had been honoured by Herod the Great for prophesying his rise to greatness. It would then be natural for this Manaen to be brought up in the household of Herod and as a companion of Herod's son Antipas (here referred to by the title he acquired, 'Tetrarch', i.e. of Galilee and Peraea. See 4. 27).
2. 'The Holy Spirit spoke.' – Presumably through the mouth of one of the 'Prophets'.
4. Cyprus. – Salamis was on the east coast and was the chief port of the island. Paphos, in the west, was the administrative capital, where the proconsul had his residence and Venus her Temple. Earthquakes and malaria have reduced it to a deserted ruin.

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7. Sergius Paulus. – Paul was a Roman citizen, but this is his first appearance before the Roman authorities. His spectacular success may have fired him with hopes of converting the Roman world to Christianity. Henceforward he drops the Jewish version of his name, Saul, and adopts the Roman version, Paul. And Luke from now on refers to 'Paul and Barnabas' not 'Barnabas and Saul', except when his story takes him back to Jerusalem.
10. 'You crafty villain, you son of Satan, you enemy of all that's good.' – Rackham points out that these are not terms of aimless abuse but specific refutations: Bar-Jesus' vaunted wisdom was in fact trickery, he was not the 'son of a Saviour' ('Bar-Jesus') but the son of Satan, and he was not a prophet of God but an enemy of the good. Ramsay points out that Elymas was a representative of the powerful Oriental religion-cum-sciences that dominated their votaries and crushed their personalities, and so the conflict between the two men was a vital one, for both.
11. 'For a time you will be blind.' – St Chrysostom thought that Paul had his own blindness after his conversion in mind, and knew that spiritual sight can come from physical blindness. If this is so, Paul is here condemning Bar-Jesus to a temporary punishment for his own good. We are anyway reminded of Peter's denunciation of a similar character, another Simon, Simon Magus of Samaria (8.9 f.).
12. 'The proconsul was convinced.' – The usual translation, 'believed', presumably implying full conversion, cannot be correct. Had a Roman proconsul been converted to Christianity at this early date Luke would certainly have made more of it. The proconsul was merely 'convinced', i.e. that the itinerant philosopher was a better one than his own household one.
13. 'Reached Perga in Pamphylia.' – The Roman Province of Pamphylia consisted of the land between the Taurus Range and the sea. Perga, the capital, was an inland town on a navigable river. The climate was unhealthy, and Ramsay suggests that Paul's words in his Letter to the Galatians, 'Ye know that through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you the first time' (Gal. 4. 13) refer to malaria caught in Perga that caused Paul to go to Pisidia, part of the high and healthy plateau of the Taurus Range, instead of staying and preaching by the coast. It is equally possible, however, that it was the pull of Antioch itself, a large metropolis with many connexions with the Roman world, that attracted Paul.
13. 'John Mark, however, here left them and returned to Jerusalem.' – The cause of this desertion remains a matter of speculation.

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Perhaps Paul's high-soaring ambitions and increasing propensity to the Gentiles offended him. Perhaps he was homesick for Jerusalem and the intimate circle that gathered in his mother's home. Paul later held the desertion against him, and it was the occasion of a quarrel between him and Barnabas (15. 36 f.).

14. Pisidian Antioch. – A Roman colony on the main route from Syria to Ephesus, an administrative capital of Galatian Phrygia. It had the cosmopolitan character – Greek, Jewish, native, and Roman – that appealed to Paul. Antioch is now nothing; its site was located in 1833 (and the near-by Lystra in 1885 and Derbe in 1888). Once the aqueduct that brought water from the foothills of the Sultan Dag was broken the city became a desert.
14. 'They went into the synagogue on the Sabbath.' – The Jewish service of the time consisted of (1) the 'Shema' – a kind of creed – with prayers and responses; (2) readings from the 'Law', i.e. the five books of Moses, and the 'Prophets', the remaining Old Testament books; and (3) an address by any suitable person such as a local or visiting Rabbi. The address was normally an exposition of one of the texts that had been read, and was sometimes followed by questions. The term 'he taught the people', used of Jesus in the Gospels, refers to this activity. An interesting comparison with this scene is Luke's account (4. 16 f.) of our Lord in the synagogue at Nazareth.
16. 'Israelites and Gentiles of the synagogue.' – This address of Paul's has much in common with the speeches of Stephen and Peter, but also much that is the result of Paul's own thinking. The thought closely resembles that of the Letter that he later wrote to these people and the other churches he established in the area – 'Galatians'. The points in the address that deserve particular mention are:
 - (1) God has always looked after his people – in Egypt, in the desert, in Canaan, under the Judges, under the Kings, under the great King David, under the greatest of all kings, Jesus.
 - (2) God has always been prepared to destroy or remove those who oppose his will – the seven nations of Canaan, King Saul when he was disobedient – and is still prepared to do so – a warning here to obdurate and unaccepting Jews.
 - (3) In spite of appearances, e.g. a humiliating death, Jesus is the fulfilment of God's promises.
 - (4) If judged according to the Law of Moses men can never be found innocent; innocence can, however, be found through faith in Jesus.

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This last point needs further clarification. The words here translated 'be found innocent' and 'find innocence' are traditionally translated as 'be justified'. Paul is here adumbrating the great doctrine, destined to become so controversial, 'justification by faith'. The word 'justification' has two connotations in the Greek as used by Paul: (1) Acquittal, being found Not Guilty; (2) Righteousness, blamelessness, a good and blameless and innocent life. The acquittal is retrospective, when a man is freed from his past sins; the righteousness and innocent life is prospective. The translation here adopted, which is a slight play upon words, attempts to convey both meanings.

43. 'Urged them to wait upon the grace of God.' – 'Grace' is a favourite word with Paul, and indicates God's gift of innocence and the state of innocence he gives.
46. 'Look, we turn to the Gentiles. That is what the Lord commanded us to do – "*I have made you a light for the Gentiles ...*"' – This command was given in 1. 8 before the Ascension, though the actual quotation echoes Simeon's words over the infant Christ in the Temple (Luke 2. 32) and those words are themselves an echo from Isa. 49. 6.
50. 'The Jews ... had Paul and Barnabas persecuted and driven from the district.' – Perhaps it was in Pisidian Antioch that Paul received one of the five beatings he mentions in one of his Letters, the regulation thirty-nine strokes (II Cor. 11. 24).
51. Iconium. – A town in the south-east corner of the Phrygian part of the Province of Galatia, high on a bare plain.

I 4

6. Lystra. – Like Pisidian Antioch it was a Roman colony, and was connected with it by a military road. It was at this time a less sophisticated town than Iconium, as is shown by the naivety of the inhabitants in the scene that follows. Unlike Iconium it had no Jewish synagogue, and Paul's preaching took the form of talking to groups of passers-by in the market-place.
6. Derbe. – The frontier town of the Roman Province of Galatia. Over the border was the Kingdom of Antiochus. Paul's mind was pointing westwards to Rome, so he turned back here.
10. 'Stand up on your feet.' – Paul must have spoken this in Greek, possibly accompanying it with a sign. The cripple would have understood some Greek. How many of the crowd of peasants

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whom Paul addressed understood his speech must remain doubtful. Probably quite a few. They, of course, used their native 'Lycaonian' when adulating Paul and Barnabas as gods. Paul and Barnabas, it appears, did not understand what they meant, and only grasped the situation when the sacrificial procession appeared.

12. 'They called Barnabas "Zeus", and Paul, because he was the spokesman, "Hermes".' – Barnabas was evidently the more impressive figure. He looked like a king, Paul like a king's servant. Zeus (the Roman version of which was 'Jupiter') was the ruler of the gods in Greek mythology, Hermes ('Mercury' to the Romans) the messenger of the gods. For a description of Paul taken from a local account see the Introduction, page 28. Local stories and inscriptions give additional evidence that Zeus and Hermes were worshipped in the district. The Roman poet Ovid gave Lystra as the scene of his story of the visit of Jupiter and Mercury to the faithful couple Baucis and Philemon. The peasants welcome the reappearance of the gods.
13. 'Gates.' – Probably the gates of the house where they were staying, though some think the temple portals or the city gates are meant.
15. 'You men, what are you doing?' – Even in this brief summary of Paul's words to the natives his tact and understanding can be seen. He identifies himself with his hearers, and refers to the simple things they would know – nature, food, happiness, and early inklings of God. He gives them just so much truth about the true God as they can understand.
19. 'They won the people over, stoned Paul, dragged him out of the city and left him for dead.' – Mobs were fickle even in those days. Of the stoning of Paul, Rackham remarks, 'S. Paul had now suffered retribution in kind for the death of S. Stephen.' Paul's ability to survive this treatment and next day walk thirty miles (to Derbe) indicates his astonishing powers of endurance.
22. 'Encouraged them to stand firm in the faith.' – But we learn from Paul's Letter to them that they subsequently were in imminent danger of falling away.
22. 'We must pass through many tribulations to reach the kingdom of God.' – Their recent experiences would provide ample material to illustrate the text, and their words would carry great weight with people who witnessed their return to cities where they had suffered so much. Paul refers with great feeling to these sufferings in subsequent Letters (II Tim. 3. 11, II Cor. 11. 25 f.).

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1. 'A party of Jews from Judaea now arrived in Antioch ...' – To understand the circumstances of the controversy at Antioch and the Council of Jerusalem, and to get a complete picture of the events, we have to supplement the facts given by Luke in this chapter with information gained from the second chapter of Paul's Letter to the Galatians, where the incidents are narrated from a different point of view. What appears to have happened is this. In the Church of Antioch, far away from the watchful eye of the strict mother church of Jerusalem, the Jewish Christians were living alongside the Gentile Christians in free and equal intercourse. The Jews had meals with the Gentiles, thus risking or undergoing what the Mosaic Law would have called ceremonial pollution from eating meat of animals that had been sacrificed to idols or meat with the blood not drained from it. Moreover they had not been insisting that the Gentile converts should be circumcised. Paul and Barnabas were there at the time, having recently returned from their missionary journey, and Peter was there too, and he also shared meals with the Gentiles.

Upon this happy intimacy burst the party of strict Jews from Jerusalem, where rigid observance of all points of the Law was enforced. They were evidently horrified at what was going on. They denounced the communal feeding, and insisted that salvation depended upon circumcision and the Law. They won over Peter, and he dissociated himself from the Gentiles at meal-times, and they made even Barnabas waver. But here Paul took his stand on principle, and 'withstood Peter to the face'. His experiences had taught him that men are justified by faith in Christ, so why revert to action which would imply that faith in Christ was not good enough and that justification could only come by the Law?

The Church decided to send Paul and Barnabas with a delegacy to Jerusalem to get a ruling on the matter. It may be that Paul was unwilling to go at first, but later consented and went willingly 'in obedience to divine revelation'. As a typical challenging gesture he asked his friend Titus, an uncircumcised Gentile, to go with him.

On their arrival in Jerusalem the delegates were honourably received by the Church. Paul and Barnabas gave an account of their missionary journey and presumably of their views on circumcision. The strict Pharisees, probably those who had stirred up the trouble at Antioch, then gave their views. There must have

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been angry undercurrents, for Paul knew that they were prompted as much by envy of him as by high principles, and were trying to wound him through Titus. The meeting, however, now broke up and the matter was taken up by a small committee of leaders – James, Peter, and John. Paul was deeply torn by inner conflict (Gal. 2 is a highly charged emotional document), but finally as a conciliatory gesture consented to Titus' circumcision. In this way he saved a principle by sacrificing it in action, for at the meeting of the committee he won his way.

What the committee had privately settled was next debated in full Council. At this Council Peter pointed out that at Caesarea God had brought salvation to the Gentiles without circumcision (the episode of the baptizing of the Roman centurion Cornelius), and he even quoted one of Paul's arguments (Gal. 2. 16) that salvation lies, for Jews as well as Gentiles, not in circumcision but in the grace of God. Paul and Barnabas next lent strength to this point by describing how in their missionary journey God had freely given his grace to the Gentiles – without circumcision. Finally the President, James, the brother of our Lord, summed up and brought the impressive weight of his authority to the side of freedom. In a brief old-world speech, full of Old Testament quotations, and calling Peter by his Hebrew name in its Hebrew version – Symeon – he maintained that Peter's action at Caesarea was justified because it was prophesied by Amos (9. 11 f.). He proceeded to draft an admirable letter to be sent back to the Church of Antioch setting out a simple way of frictionless coexistence between Jew and Gentile. He ended by pointing out that the Law would not be threatened or undermined by this policy.

His proposals won unanimous agreement. Presumably the strict Pharisees, having won a tactical victory on the circumcision of Titus, were content to suffer strategic defeat in the matter of the principle. The letter was sent, and as often happens when two parties engaged in violent controversy are offered a *via media* by an outside arbiter, the recommendations from Jerusalem were gladly received and accepted.

20. 'Fornication.' – This word may have a broader meaning of breaking the Jewish marriage laws (Lev. 18).
20. 'From flesh of animals killed by strangling, and from flesh which still has the blood in it.' – Lev. 17. 10 f. forbade the eating of such meat, as, according to Jewish belief, the soul resided in the blood.
37. 'Barnabas wanted to take John Mark as one of their company. Paul, however...' – In Chapter 13 Luke described how John Mark,

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who was Barnabas' cousin, had refused to accompany him and Paul into the hinterland of Pamphylia. Barnabas now pleads with Paul to forgive him. Paul stands firm, and there is a quarrel. Luke outlines the facts, leaving his readers to imagine the distress and inner conflict. We learn from Paul's letters that the quarrel with Barnabas was later made up (1 Cor. 9. 6) and that Mark eventually won Paul's approval and worked with him (II Tim. 4. 11 and Col. 4. 10).

16

- 1-3. 'A disciple called Timothy. His mother was a Jewess... Paul... circumcised him.' - It is probable that in Lystra Paul lodged with Timothy's mother, whose name we learn from Paul's Letter to Timothy was Eunice. It is perhaps surprising that Paul should circumcise Timothy and then proceed to tell the churches that according to the findings of the Council of Jerusalem circumcision was not necessary for Gentiles. But Paul was always conciliatory.
- 5-6. 'The congregations increased daily. Paul and his company...' - The paragraph ending with the words 'increased daily' concludes the story of the controversy about Gentiles and the Jewish Law and the Council of Jerusalem. The next words begin the story of the spread of Christianity in the three great Roman provinces that encircled the Aegean Sea, Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia.
- 5-8. 'Paul and his company... Troas.' - At this point Paul was presumably planning to go west to Ephesus and the Aegean Coast. He receives, however, a prohibition from the Spirit not to preach in Asia and so goes straight north, through a part of Asia but not preaching, and plans to make a tour of Bithynia, the province north of Asia, bordering the Euxine. Again he receives a divine prohibition, and turns due west through Mysia, the north-west district of the Province of Asia, on a route that can only lead to Troas, and there God intervenes a third time. The three divine guides are called respectively the Spirit, the spirit of Jesus, and God - the three Persons of the Trinity. Troas was a maritime city on the coast of Mysia, on the regular route to Macedonia, and a Roman colony.
- 9, 12. 'Macedonia... Philippi.' - The Greeks of the golden age had despised the Macedonians, but under Philip and Alexander they had conquered most of the countries round the Eastern Mediterranean. After Alexander's death Macedonian families ruled most of what is now the 'Middle East'. Rome had finally conquered

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Macedonia in 168 B.C. Philippi, which had been founded by Philip, acquired importance from the battle fought near by in 42, during the Roman Civil War. In the 'Acts' the Macedonians appear as a sturdy, independent people. Luke is particularly interested in Philippi. Some have thought he was a native of the town; Ramsay thought it had been the home of his ancestors. His attachment to it may, however, be simply due to his having been left in charge of the church there when Paul went on. H.V. Morton describes how he found the site of Philippi now absolutely desolate except for a watchman's hut set there during the excavations of the ruins of the city, 10-15 feet below surface level.

11. Samothrace. – An island half-way between Troas and Neapolis, the port of Philippi.
12. 'Philippi, the most important city of its district of Macedonia, and a Roman colony.' – Actually Thessalonica had been made the capital of this district when the Romans had conquered Macedonia and divided it into four districts. Either Philippi had become the capital, or its citizens, backed by Luke, claimed that it was, or Luke means that although not actually the capital it was nevertheless the most important city.
13. 'Outside the city gate to the riverside, the usual place of prayer.' – There was evidently no synagogue in Philippi. It was a city of military not commercial importance, and would not have attracted Jews.
14. '... Lydia. She was a native of Thyatira.' – Thyatira was a city in Lydia – hence the woman's name – a district of Asia famous for the industry of purple dyeing.
15. 'She and her household were baptized.' – In those days the children and servants usually accepted unquestioningly the religion (and politics) of the head of the house.
17. 'These men are servants of the Most High God.' – The term was probably the usual Gentile term for the God of the Jews. It was the term used by the evil spirit to Christ (Luke 8. 28). Christ exorcized that spirit, as Paul does this. Like Christ Paul refused to have the help of evil spirits in the propagation of the Gospel, presumably not believing that the ends justify the means.
21. 'Advocating customs which it would be illegal for us as Roman citizens to accept and practise.' – In the Roman Empire Judaism was a 'permitted religion', but proselytizing was not permitted, as it would have drawn Roman citizens from their allegiance to the worship of the Emperor and from such civic duties as military service.

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22. 'Ordered them to be stripped and flogged.' – It was illegal to flog (or crucify) Roman citizens. The cry '*Civis Romanus sum*' ('I am a Roman citizen') was sufficient to safeguard a man from violence in every part of the Empire, except on occasions, like this one, when feelings ran very high. It is possible, of course, that Paul did not utter it.
27. 'The prison governor ... drew his sword to kill himself.' – He would have been answerable for his prisoners' safe-keeping with his life.
30. 'Gentlemen, what must I do to be saved?' – Perhaps the governor attributed the earthquake to Paul's prayers.
33. 'After washing the wounds caused by their flogging, he and all his household were baptized.' – Bruce quotes St Chrysostom – 'He washed them clean from their wounds, he was washed clean from his sins.'
37. 'They must come in person and conduct us out.' – Paul was not here merely standing on his dignity. He was establishing the dignity of the church, so that when he left Philippi it might be secured from attack. The church at Philippi always remained dear to Paul's heart. Rackham points out that the characteristic word of the Letter to the Philippians is 'joy', and the Philippians were the only church to whom Paul allowed the privilege of supplying his financial need. The spiritual health of this church may perhaps partly be due to the influence of Luke, whom Paul left in charge when he himself went on to Athens.

I7

1. 'They took the road through Amphipolis and Apollonia and reached Thessalonica.' – This was the Roman Road, the Egnatian Way. Amphipolis and Apollonia have now disappeared from the map. Thessalonica (the modern Salonica) was an important commercial city. It was the capital of Macedonia, and a free city. It had a democratic constitution, and the people were the judiciary (see verse 5). Its chief magistrates had the title of 'politarch'. As usual, Paul's enemies chose the cleverest way of getting rid of him. In Roman colonies like Antioch some of the women of the ruling classes would be proselytes of Judaism, and here the Jews would get them to work on their men-folk and poison their minds against the new sect. In democracies like Thessalonica they set the mob to work.

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5. Jason. – Jews in the Gentile world often adopted Greek names that resembled their Jewish names. Jason stood for Joshua.
10. 'The Brotherhood promptly sent Paul and Silas away by night to Beroea.' – Paul probably permitted himself to be sent away because to stay would have further endangered his friends, who were standing surety for him. His departure did not in fact secure them from severe persecution (see I Thess. 2. 14, 3. 3, II. 1. 6). Beroea was sixty miles west of Thessalonica, a small town on foothills above a marshy plain.
11. 'The Jews here were finer spirits.' – The Authorized Version translation is 'more noble', and the word may have a social as well as a moral significance. Luke is always interested in distinctions of class, and frequently mentions important converts to Christianity, e.g. the wives of the leading men (v. 4) and the influential Greek women and men (v. 12).
15. Athens. – The heyday of Athens had been 500 years before this time. Socrates had been judicially killed 450 years before, and Rome had conquered Greece 200 years before (146 B.C.). She remained as the most glorious town in the world for her art and her architecture. She was the most renowned University town, and the centre of much philosophical and religious activity, and of course a great commercial city. The picture, however, that Luke gives us of Athens is a city without a soul. The citizens' interest even in philosophy lacks basic seriousness. Their attitude to Paul's new ideas begins as one of curiosity tinged with condescension, and ends as one of indifference tinged with contempt. And of course Paul had no eye for the external beauty of the city. The Jews, brought up on the second commandment – Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth, etc. – were not likely to appreciate sculpture or painting.
17. 'Every day entered into argument with the passers-by in the city centre.' – Paul always adapted himself to his environment. This method of spreading ideas had been practised in Athens for hundreds of years, dating back to a time before Socrates practised it.
18. 'Some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers.' – The ideal of Epicurus (341–270 B.C.) was happiness unruffled by passion, superstition, or fear of an after-life. The gods existed, but in a world apart, and indifferent to the cares of men. His philosophy could, and did, degenerate into easy-going worldliness and pleasure-seeking. The Stoics, named after the Stoa Poikile (Painted Portico) where their founder Zeno (340–265 B.C.) taught, had a nobler and more

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- idealistic philosophy. They believed in a God whose essence permeated the Universe and which mortals shared. They believed in the brotherhood of man, and that human life should conform to reason, and that when life could no longer be lived with dignity it was permissible to commit suicide. Stoicism had inspired some of the noblest souls in the times of the Republic in Rome, as well as now under the Empire. It tended, however, to be the religion of the aristocracy, and fostered a haughty pride and self-sufficiency.
18. 'Dilettante.' – Authorized Version 'babbler'. Literally the word means 'seed-picker', 'picker-up of trifles', here used with the sense of 'intellectual beach-comber'.
18. 'The words "Jesus" and "Resurrection" ... "strange deities".' – The Greek for 'Resurrection' – 'Anastasis' – sounds like the name of a female goddess. It seems strange that in a city where the worship of so many deities flourished, including 'unknown' ones, the citizens should have been so hostile to the introduction of new ones, but they were and always had been. One of the charges against Socrates was inventing new gods.
19. Council of the Areopagus. – This was the Athenian Senate, which dated back to the earliest days of Athens. In the golden age its power had declined with the rise of democracy, but by this time it had recovered much of its authority. Among other matters it decided religious problems. It met at this time in the Stoa Basilica. Paul was summoned not so much for trial as for an interview by an examining board on his teaching and character. The Council appears to have had some control over adult education and boy education, and wished to satisfy themselves on Paul's qualifications. The courteous phraseology of the President is to be noted.
22. 'Men of Athens, I notice that you are in many ways very interested in religion.' – The Authorized Version translation of 'very interested in religion' is 'too superstitious', which gives a wrong impression. It is most unlikely that after the courteous preliminaries Paul would have begun his defence with an insult, more especially as he evidently intended to use the occasion for converting his audience. His obvious starting-point was the 'interest in religion' that they already had, and even their worship of the 'unknown' he pretends to interpret as a willingness to learn more. He proceeds to an exposition of 'natural religion' composed largely of Epicurean and Stoic ideas. The idea of the self-sufficiency of God was Epicurean; God as the source of life, the brotherhood of man, and predestination were Stoic ideas. He further woos them by quotations from two Greek poets. It is true that not all of his

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words so far would have won agreement from all his hearers. In particular many of the Athenians, with their contempt for all foreigners as 'barbarians', would have disliked the idea of all races having sprung from one man (Adam). He had, however, shown them that he was knowledgeable and cultured.

28. 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' – A quotation from the Cretan poet Epimenides.
29. 'Some of your own poets.' – In fact the quotation is from the Stoic poet Aratus, who came from Cilicia. Presumably by 'your own' Paul meant 'of the Stoics'.
30. 'God ... now commands all men everywhere to repent.' – Up till this part of his speech Paul had not presented his listeners with any of the 'new ideas' which they were so fond of 'communicating or listening to'. Now, however, he delivers his gospel message. In Luke's account it sounds bald and unconvincing. It is also difficult to credit that Paul, with his high sensitivity to audiences, would have quoted an Old Testament psalm (9. 8) to such a gathering. One wishes we had a full verbatim report of what he said.
34. Dionysius. – Tradition claims that he became the first Bishop of Athens.

18

1. Corinth. – Corinth is situated on the narrow isthmus that connects northern and southern Greece. In earlier times it had been the naval rival of Athens, but the Romans had razed it to the ground in 146 B.C. Julius Caesar refounded it 100 years later, and it became the capital of Achaia and the seat of the Roman proconsul. It rapidly regained its commercial power, for all traffic between the two parts of Greece had to pass through it. In addition the quickest and least dangerous route for mariners travelling from the East to Rome was to sail to Corinth's port Cenchreae and then have their ship dragged over the isthmus on rollers to the twin port of Lechaeum, or convey their cargo by wagons to another ship. Corinth was notorious for its sexual immorality, which the presence of a thousand consecrated prostitutes in the Temple of Venus near by could hardly fail to encourage. Of Paul's preference of Corinth to Athens as a place to settle for missionary work A. D. Nock in his *St Paul* comments, 'It is easier to convert the Prodigal Son than his brother or his uncle who is a professor.'
2. 'Aquila ... and his wife Priscilla, who had recently come from Italy as a result of Claudius' edict banishing all Jews from Rome.' –

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Edicts against the Jews in Rome were quite frequent during the century, but not very effective. This edict, made by the Emperor Claudius in A.D. 49, was the result of disturbances caused by the preaching of Christianity there. We learn much in Paul's Letters about Priscilla and Aquila – that is the usual order of naming them, which seems to indicate their relative importance to Paul and Luke. We find them later at Ephesus, and Rome (so much for Imperial edicts!).

3. 'Leather-workers.' – This seems to be the meaning of the word traditionally translated 'tent-makers'.
5. 'However, when Silas and Timothy arrived.' – Paul had been in low spirits, but their arrival, with good news from the Thessalonians, restored him, and he wrote off a Letter to Thessalonica (I Thess.). His two friends also brought money from the Philippians, which enabled him to devote his whole time to spiritual matters.
9. 'One night in a vision the Lord told Paul, "*Put aside your fears.*"' – It is evident that Paul's depression was still continuing. Presumably he was exhausted by the constant succession of clashes with the Jews that had occurred in almost every city on his journeys. The Jews in Corinth must have been exasperated by the conversion of one of their leading men, Crispus, and have shown it. The setting-up of what must have been regarded by them as a rival establishment next door to the synagogue can hardly have helped to smooth matters down. We learn from Paul's Letters that he was under attack (II Thess. 3. 2), and that he was obsessed by feelings of inferiority in front of the Corinthian congregation, thinking that they thought him insignificant in appearance and a poor speaker (II Cor. 10. 10, I Cor. 2. 3, 4). Now, however, the Lord comes to him in a vision, quotes Isaiah 43. 5, and gives him courage. Paul decides to stay, and stays eighteen months. From his Letters we hear of the success of his work. He made many converts among the Corinthians, who appear as a gifted, passionate, and wayward people.
12. 'However, when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia.' – Gallio was the brother of Nero's tutor – the writer Seneca – and the uncle of the poet Lucan, and himself an ex-consul and a man of consummate charm. His proconsulship probably began in 51. It would have been interesting to see what such a man would have made of Paul and his message. Unfortunately he did not give Paul time to speak, so quickly did he see through the trumped-up charge that Paul was spreading a 'forbidden religion'. The first Roman Governor

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before whom Paul appeared – Sergius Paulus in Cyprus – had been deeply impressed by him.

17. 'The bystanders had seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and given him a beating in front of the judge's seat. Gallio was indifferent to the whole affair.' – This hardly sounds like Roman justice, or Roman dignity, though we may think Sosthenes deserved a beating. It is not quite clear whether Luke means that Gallio was indifferent to the problems of the Jewish religion or to the rough justice administered in his own law-court.
18. 'At Cenchreae he cut his hair, as part of a vow.' – It was the Jewish custom to cut or shave off the hair at the beginning and end of a vow. Vows were taken 'to obtain, or express gratitude for, deliverance from danger and trouble' (Rackham). We can only guess Paul's reason for his vow.
19. Ephesus. – A city of great might and magnificence. It was situated near the mouth of the Cayster, on the main trade route between East and West, and so was immensely wealthy. It was the capital of the Roman Province of Asia, and so had all the prestige of that honour. It possessed one of the Seven Wonders of the World – the Temple of Artemis – and was a centre of a multiplicity of religions and magic practices. In a word, Ephesus was exactly the type of city that most attracted Paul. The silt from the Cayster has now covered the low-lying part of the town, and buried the Temple twenty feet deep. The ruins of the upper part of the town are surrounded by a malarial swamp.
- 22, 23. 'Then went down to Antioch. After some time there he left' etc. – At this point 'Missionary Journey III' begins, but one who has been reading consecutively will immediately realize the inadequacy of thinking of Paul's work as divided into three journeys, with Antioch as headquarters.
- 24, 25. 'Apollós ... though the only baptism he knew was that of John.' – Presumably some of John the Baptist's disciples had not kept in touch with the events in Jerusalem – the crucifixion, the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, and the early work of the church.
27. 'When he arrived he proved of great help to the faithful.' – We learn from Paul's Letters to the Corinthians that Apollós was so successful in Corinth that some of the congregation split off and became his followers. Paul, however, strongly approved of him, for Apollós, instead of encouraging and exploiting this partisan spirit, returned to Ephesus, and was unwilling to go back to Corinth even when Paul urged him.

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1. 'Paul, travelling by the higher route, reached Ephesus.' – Instead of taking the lower road along the Lycus and Maeander valleys Paul travelled by the more hilly road farther north.
1. 'He found a group of disciples.' – We can only guess how this small group of twelve men heard of Christianity, and having heard failed to learn all. Ramsay suggests that they were disciples of John the Baptist, and Paul recognized their need from their severe and gloomy asceticism. However, at Paul's hands they now received the Pentecostal Spirit.
8. 'For three months Paul went to the synagogue.' – The Jews of Ephesus seem to have been remarkably slow to show the usual hostile reaction to Paul's preaching.
9. 'Continued his daily discussions in the lecture-hall of Tyrannus.' – The 'Gymnasium' of Greek towns, in addition to providing facilities for sport, possessed halls where philosophers and poets gave instruction or recited their works. We know nothing of Tyrannus.
10. 'Two years passed in this way.' – Together with the three months already mentioned and the time still to elapse his stay in Ephesus lasted very nearly three years (v. 20. 31). From Paul's first Letter to the Corinthians and his later Letter to the Ephesians we learn more about this period. In addition to his lectures Paul did his pastoral work and laboured at his trade. He or his helpers must also have founded the other six of the seven churches mentioned in the Revelation of St John the Divine: Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. He had fearful sufferings and opposition, of course, as expressed in the sentence 'I fought with beasts at Ephesus' (1 Cor. 15. 32) – not real ones in the amphitheatre but metaphorical ones.
11. 'God brought about unusual miracles at Paul's hands.' – Rackham compares the effects attributed to Peter's shadow (5. 15) and Philip's miracles in Samaria (8), and comments, 'To a superstitious people a superstitious appeal is allowed.' He compares the exorcists in Ephesus who used the name of Jesus with Simon Magus in Samaria who wished to use the Holy Spirit.
14. 'The seven sons of Sceva, a Jew, and a "Chief Priest".' – Bruce points out that Luke lacked the device of inverted commas to bring out the fact that Sceva was a self-styled Chief Priest, not a real one. Nowadays we do not lack it.

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15. 'Jesus I know and Paul I know of, but who are you?' – Evil spirits in the New Testament are always shrewd. This one is also witty.
19. 'Several practitioners of magic collected their books and made a fire of them in public.' – Instances of such burnings are frequent in history. In modern times the burning has usually been accomplished by opponents of the authors.
20. 'The Word of the Lord continued to spread and demonstrate its power.' – It so continued for some centuries. St John lived his last days in Ephesus, and many of the scholars and saints of the early church came from the town, as well as some heretics. But 'Today the port of Ephesus is a marsh, and its site is marked by a few ruins: "its candlestick has been removed out of its place"' (Rackham, quoting Revelation 2. 5).
21. 'At the end of this period ... Paul ... said, "I must go to Rome as well."' – From this verse to the end of the book Rome is the theme – Paul's desire to reach it and the unexpected way he does so.
22. Timothy and Erastus. – The last we heard of Timothy was his arrival in Corinth from Macedonia. Of Erastus we know nothing.
24. 'Demetrius, a silversmith engaged in the making of miniature silver statuettes of Artemis.' – These were souvenirs of Ephesus; the extant ones in terra-cotta represent the goddess standing in a niche. This Artemis bore no resemblance in character or appearance to the slim virgin goddess of the hunt of Greek mythology (or her Roman equivalent Diana) but was a primitive Asian fertility goddess endowed with multiple breasts. The main statue of her in the Temple at Ephesus was reputed to have fallen from heaven (v. 35).
25. 'Comrades.' – The style of the guild-master is highly oratorical and exaggerated. With worldly common sense he puts finance before religion. This is the second time that Paul clashed with the Gentiles over a vested interest. The first occasion was the case of the girl fortune-teller of Philippi (16. 16 f.).
29. 'Two Macedonians, Gaius and Aristarchus.' – We hear of this couple again as Paul's travelling-companions (20. 4).
29. The Amphitheatre. – Modern excavations have shown that it could hold about 25,000 people. It was used for the ordinary meetings of the Assembly of the People, and extraordinary ones like this.
31. 'Some of the Asiarchs.' – The term describes the Chief Priests in charge of the province's worship of the Emperor. Paul evidently had some powerful friends.

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35. 'The Mayor finally quietened the crowd and addressed them.' – The Authorized Version translation is 'Town Clerk'. He was 'an Ephesian, not a Roman official, but as the most important native official of the provincial capital he was in close touch with the Roman authorities, who would hold him responsible for the riotous assembly' (Bruce). Reading his controlled and ironical speech one can see how he attained his high office.
38. 'There are the assizes and the proconsuls.' – Actually ONE pro-consul only, who would have presided at the assizes.

20

- 1, 2. 'Paul ... left for Macedonia. ... Then he went on into Greece.' – From his second Letter to the Corinthians, which seems to have been composed over a period of time about now, we learn more of this journey, which lasted for a year (A.D. 55–56). One of the purposes of the journey was to collect gifts for the poor in the church of Jerusalem. The seven travelling-companions mentioned in verse 4 were the delegates from the contributing churches. Paul hoped that this almsgiving would bring together the Gentile and Jewish churches, and also justify his own actions in the eyes of the authorities in the church of Jerusalem. His Letter to the Romans suggests that his travels of this year may even have taken him into Illyricum. (Rom. 15. 19. See Map, p. 90.)
3. 'He was on the point of sailing for Syria when a plot against his life was discovered.' – It has been suggested that Paul intended to sail on a ship taking Jewish pilgrims to Jerusalem for the Passover. Murder on a ship overflowing with pilgrims would be easy and undetected – a knife, a push. Paul learnt of the plot to kill him – we never hear how – and decided on the longer route by land, which would enable him to arrive in Jerusalem in time for Pentecost though not for the Passover. He celebrated the Passover in Philippi.
4. Sopater. – Probably the Sosipater of Rom. 16. 21.
4. Aristarchus. – He later was imprisoned and travelled to Rome with Paul (27. 2).
4. Secundus. – We know nothing of him.
4. Gaius of Doberus. – The Authorized Version reading is 'Gaius of Derbe'. It is probable that he was the Gaius mentioned in 19. 29. But that Gaius was a Macedonian, and Derbe was in Galatia, not Macedonia. However, one MS. reads 'Doberus', – which was a

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- town in Macedonia – and that reading is probably correct.
4. Timothy. – A favourite companion of Paul, last mentioned in 19. 22.
 4. Tychicus. – He was later with Paul in Rome.
 4. Trophimus of Asia. – We hear of him later in Jerusalem (21. 29) where he is called more specifically an Ephesian.
 5. 'Who had gone ahead and were waiting for us at Troas.' – From the fact that a 'we-passage' begins here one knows that Luke was one of Paul's companions on this journey. He was last mentioned in 16. 16 as being left in Philippi, but it is possible that Paul had sent him to Corinth with Titus. This depends on our identifying him with the 'brother who has won the praise of all the churches by his preaching of the gospel' mentioned in II Cor. 8. 18. If this was Luke he may have accompanied Paul from Corinth onwards instead of Philippi onwards. Anyway he remained with Paul during all the adventures described in the remaining chapters, which accounts for their detail and graphic quality.
 7. 'On the first day of the week.' – The Jews reckoned a day as beginning at sunset, the Romans (and everyone else since) at sunrise. Commentators disagree as to which practice Luke is following here, so this meeting may have begun on Saturday or Sunday evening. The former seems the more probable, as the main Eucharist of the week would surely have taken place at the time of the Resurrection, early on Sunday morning (and not Monday).
 7. 'We were assembled for the breaking of bread.' – Unfortunately there is uncertainty about the order and nature of the service, as the phrase 'breaking of bread' seems to have been applied to both the actual eucharist and to the *agapé* or love-feast that followed or preceded it. It seems likely, however, that they met in the evening, and after prayers listened to Paul's long address, celebrated the eucharist in the early hours, and finally breakfasted.
 9. 'When they picked him up he was dead.' – Most commentators suppose that he was actually dead, and compare the occasion with Jesus' 'raising' of Jairus' daughter. Others, myself included, prefer to take Paul's words – 'There is life in him', and Jesus' words – 'She is not dead but asleep' (Mark 5. 39) at their face value: Eutychus and Jairus' daughter were merely unconscious, but **WOULD** have died but for the miraculous cure.
 12. 'There was great rejoicing when the young man rejoined them safe and sound.' – Evidently he had been taken away to rest and sleep, and was brought back by his friends just before Paul left.

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13. 'He himself intended to go by land.' – Rackham suggests that he wanted and needed to be alone after his immense expenditure of power at the healing. The land route across the promontory was about twenty miles.
14. Mytilene. – The chief town on the island of Lesbos.
15. Miletus. – A city thirty miles from Ephesus, now a malarial marsh.
18. 'Addressed them in these words.' – This magnificent speech is the only example we have in the 'Acts' of how Paul spoke to those whom he knew and loved. Luke must have listened to it and made notes at the time. It contains many Pauline ideas that we find in the Letters, especially 'Ephesians', 'Colossians', and the Pastoral Letters. The speech contains a defence of his life and work in Ephesus, a proudly-humble vindication of himself as the minister and agent of God, a disclosure of the dangers awaiting him in Jerusalem, a warning against enemies from within the church and without, a pastoral charge, and a farewell.
20. 'I never shrank from disclosing anything that was vital to you.' – Ephesus was rank with esoteric religions for secret groups of the initiated *élite*. Paul's claim is that the Gospel is free and open, and that he has proclaimed it in full – 'the **WHOLE** of God's will' (v. 27).
25. 'None of you ... will ever see me again.' – If the Pastoral Letters are genuine this prophecy did not come true.
28. 'The flock ... to shepherd the Church.' – The famous metaphor used by David in the 23rd Psalm and hallowed by our Lord in his last charge to Peter – 'Feed my sheep'.
28. 'The Church of the Lord which he *purchased* with his own blood.' – A reference to Psalm 74. 2 and to the atonement achieved in the crucifixion.
- 29, 30. 'Wolves ... men who will distort the truth to seduce the disciples.' – The Letters to the Ephesians and Colossians and the Pastoral Letters give further warnings of this sort and describe the activities of these enemies (II Tim. 3. 6, Tit. 1. 11).
32. 'The inheritance you share with *all who live dedicated lives*.' – Deut. 33. 3 f.
35. 'The words of the Lord Jesus.' – These words are not actually recorded in the Gospels. Many of his sayings not found there must have circulated among his Apostles and disciples.
37. 'They all burst into tears.' – We learn something of Paul from this reaction of his friends.

1. Cos. – For the places on this voyage see map, p. 108.
1. Rhodes. – Luke makes no mention of the Colossus, which the travellers must have seen. It was a statue of Apollo, 112 feet high, with a spiral staircase inside, which enabled beacons to be lit in the eyes as a warning to shipping. It did NOT straddle the harbour. It subsequently fell into the sea during an earthquake.
8. 'Philip the Evangelist, one of "the Seven".' – He is thus distinguished from Philip the Apostle, one of 'the Twelve'. After his work as 'evangelist' in Samaria and his baptizing of the Ethiopian eunuch he went to Caesarea (8. 40), where presumably he married and settled.
- 10, 11. 'Agabus ... took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet and said ...' – Agabus' dramatic action has an Old Testament ring about it (cf. Jer. 13), as have the phraseology he uses and his uncompromising forthrightness. It is noticeable that he does not try to dissuade Paul from the journey to Jerusalem.
14. 'We said, "The Lord's will be done," and said no more.' – Rackham points out the resemblance to Our Lord's words in the Garden of Gethsemane, and draws other parallels between Jesus' last journey and Paul's.
15. 'We hired horses' (Revised Version has 'took up our baggage'). – The translation given is more likely correct. Jerusalem was sixty or seventy miles from Caesarea, and they took two days.
16. 'Escorted us as far as the house of Mnason ... one of the original disciples, with whom we were to break our journey.' – The text is confused, but this seems the meaning.
- 17, 18. 'We were warmly welcomed by the Brotherhood. ... In the presence of all the Elders, Paul and the rest of us were received by James.' – The welcome may have been warm, but James, the head of the church in Jerusalem, foresaw trouble with the stricter Jewish Christians, and that is why the meeting he summoned was only for the Elders.
19. 'Paul gave a full account.' – As we later learn, the collection for the poor of the church in Jerusalem was also handed over, presumably by the delegates, of whom Luke was one.
20. 'You see, brother.' – James' words are friendly. His tone implies that he knows the falsity of the accusation that Paul had urged Jewish Christians to renounce their traditional customs. We also know they were false. Paul's view was that neither should Jews

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- give up their customs nor should Gentiles be forced to adopt them.
24. 'Make a similar vow yourself and pay the expenses involved in their fulfilling their vows.' – Paul had made a vow of his own on leaving Corinth. These four men must have been poor men who would have found it difficult to redeem their vow, the cost of which, according to Numbers 6. 13 f., was two lambs, one ram, bread, cakes, wafers, and meat and drink offerings. It is just possible that the men had overrun the allotted time, and were faced with the prospect of living unshorn and without wine indefinitely. Wealthy men who came to the rescue of poor men on these occasions had to share their vow, 'undertake a similar vow' – that is the meaning of the Authorized Version 'purify themselves' – for their help to be efficacious. It is noteworthy that Paul was now considered well-off. He may have inherited some money or have been given some by admirers and wellwishers, e.g. Luke.
27. 'Before the seven days were ended.' – Probably the time he had planned for his stay.
27. 'Stirred the crowd to a frenzy.' – It was not difficult to do this, witness the occurrences that preceded the deaths of Our Lord and Stephen. At the Festival of Pentecost Jerusalem and the Temple were crowded with pilgrims bent on devotion and excitement. The Romans, who garrisoned the Fort of Antonia north of the Outer Court (v. p. 120 and drawing, p. 40), had soldiers patrolling the roofs of the cloisters on the look-out for trouble. The one sure way to provoke a riot was to mention treasonable statements about the Temple, or actual defilement of the Temple by the hated Gentiles. Gentiles were barred on pain of death from going further than the Court of the Gentiles.
30. 'Dragged him outside the Temple. Immediately the gates were shut behind them.' – Here as in the two previous verses 'Temple' means the Inner Court, and the 'gates' were those which separated that from the Court of the Gentiles. Probably the Levite guard under the Commander of the Temple wished to secure the sacred property from damage in a riot or from the pollution of a lynching.
31. 'The military tribune.' – We learn his name later – Claudius Lysias.
35. 'Paul had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob.' – The soldiers must have formed a solid phalanx and carried Paul above their heads in the centre, away from the stretching arms of the mob. Luke's indignation and horror at the plight of his friend comes through in the words he uses.
38. 'Then you're not the Egyptian...' – This pseudo-prophet, one of

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- many at this time of national ferment, had in A.D. 54 led a vast crowd to the Mount of Olives promising that at a word of command the walls of Jerusalem would fall flat, like those of Jericho. Actually the miracle was prevented by a detachment of soldiers who sallied forth and killed hundreds of the unfortunate people. The ringleader escaped, and his re-emergence was expected by many, including the tribune.
38. The 'Assassins'. – They took their name, *Sicarii*, from the Latin word *sica*, meaning 'dagger'. They were a group of extremists who fanatically opposed the Romans, and had even killed a High Priest, Jonathan, in the Temple itself, for being too moderate.
39. 'From Tarsus in Cilicia, and a citizen of that by no means insignificant city.' – Authorized Version has 'a citizen of no mean city'. Even with an enraged mob at his back – whom he asks to be allowed to face – Paul can talk calmly in figures of speech.
40. 'Addressed them, in Aramaic.' – Better than Greek in the circumstances.

22

3. 'Paul went on, "I am a Jew".' – In this speech to the angry crowd Paul stresses his Jewishness. He tells them he was born and bred a Jew, followed Jewish customs, assisted at Stephen's stoning, and harried the Christians as far as Damascus. His change from persecuting the 'Way' to following it was the result of a vision sent by God. His missionary activity was undertaken at God's command, and confirmed by a strict and devout Jew. His leaving Jerusalem for Gentile lands was not his own wish but on God's orders. As we might expect he presents the facts in a way least likely to antagonize his hearers. Thus he emphasizes his Jewish upbringing in Jerusalem whereas to the tribune he had emphasized his citizenship of Tarsus. Again, he gives as his reason for leaving Jerusalem the Lord's command, omitting the other reason, that the Brotherhood had discovered a plot against his life and hurried him away to safety in Caesarea (9. 29 f.). He is also careful not to mention the name of Jesus more than once, prudently calling him 'the Righteous One' or merely 'He'.
3. Gamaliel. – See 5. 34.
5. The journey to Damascus. – Cf. Chapters 9 and 26 for slightly different accounts of Paul's conversion.
20. 'Your witness Stephen.' – The Greek word *martus*, originally meaning 'witness', has in this usage already acquired half of its

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later significance – ‘martyr’. The reason for the development in meaning is that many of the early ‘witnesses’ to Christ were ‘martyred’.

21. ‘... among the Gentiles.’ – The crowd had been patient till now, but the word reminded them of the accusation against him and his supposed apostasy from the Law.
24. ‘Questioned under the lash.’ – I.e. the scourge. Jesus had been scourged, but he was not a Roman citizen. Paul had endured a beating with rods at Philippi, but the scourge was a far more vicious instrument.
27. ‘Are YOU a Roman citizen?’ – The Authorized and Revised Versions do not bring out the meaning of this interchange. The Roman officer Claudius Lysias is amazed that the insignificant little man before him, now battered, bloody, and torn, should be his equal in this respect. He himself was not born to the citizenship but had purchased it, as was frequently done under the Emperor Claudius – hence his name ‘Claudius’.

23

1. ‘Paul fixed his eyes on the Sanhedrin and began.’ – This is the fifth trial before the Sanhedrin in the New Testament, the others being those of Jesus, Peter and John, the Twelve, and Stephen. Paul was present at that of Stephen, and may even have been a member of the Council that condemned him. It has been pointed out that Paul has at last fallen foul of the Sadducees, and, as in the case of Jesus and Stephen, it was to prove his undoing. The Sadducees did not like those who provoked riots that necessitated Roman intervention. Now that the Pharisees had turned against Paul they saw their chance. Luckily Paul is temporarily saved by a factional quarrel in court, for both parties hated each other more than they hated Paul. After this trial the Sadducees are left to continue the prosecution alone (24. 1).
1. ‘All my life I have lived with a clear conscience in the eyes of God.’ – The Greek emphasizes the ‘I’. It must have been spoken with an insulting intonation. Paul goes straight in to the attack.
2. ‘The High Priest, Ananias, ordered the attendants to strike him on the mouth.’ – ‘Both Micaiah, the son of Imlah, and Jeremiah had been thus smitten, and they had made stern answers (1 Kings 22. 24–25, Jer. 20. 2–6)’ – Rackham. Ananias is known to have been a violent, avaricious, and rapacious man.

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3. 'It's you that God will strike, you specious fraud.' – Jesus had also been struck in the Sanhedrin (John 18. 23), but had given a mild answer. Some commentators have criticized Paul for this angry outburst, but he must have had in his mind all along the Sanhedrin's treatment of his beloved Master, and one loves him for it. His prophecy came true in A.D. 66 – God did 'strike' Ananias: he was assassinated for being insufficiently anti-Roman. The Authorized Version for 'specious fraud' is 'thou whited wall'. The metaphor is from a weak defensive city wall made to look strong, rather than a reference to Jesus' words 'whited sepulchre'.
5. 'I did not know ... that he was High Priest.' – Various explanations for Paul's excuse have been made, e.g. Paul was myopic, Paul was confused between the various Chief Priests present, Paul had not seen who had given the order for the blow. Some have felt that the words should be translated: 'I did not reflect that ...' I have preferred to leave readers to make their own interpretation. It may be that Paul was not speaking the truth. Certainly he had now regained his temper. It is possible that he might never have lost it but for the deep spiritual disturbances caused by past memories, especially feelings of guilt over his part in the stoning of Stephen.
6. 'When Paul realized that there were two factions present.' – It appears that Luke has here omitted the accusation and Paul's defence, which must have included a retelling of the story of the journey to Damascus. In verse 9 a Pharisee says, 'If a spirit has spoken to him ...'
6. 'I am a Pharisee... I hope for the resurrection of the dead.' – Again Paul has been criticized for employing this ruse and driving a wedge between his judges. But why should he have virtually signed his own death warrant? Condemnation by the Sanhedrin could only have ended in his execution. He had more than his own life to fight for, he had his Master's gospel. Anyway, he DID believe in the resurrection of the dead, with Jesus as proof.
11. 'That night the Lord appeared at Paul's side and said, "Have courage."' – The Lord had come and strengthened Paul in depression on another occasion, in Corinth. We can imagine his emotions at the failure of his hopes of going to Rome, and his physical exhaustion after his double mauling.
12. 'Some Jews banded together.' – These were probably Zealots, or even *Sicarii*, 'Assassins'. Of course by their plot they solved a problem for Claudius Lysias, who must have been worried about his important prisoner. All he now had to do to avoid the responsibility was to send Paul to a higher authority, which he

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proceeded to do. On the failure of their plot the plotters were presumably rescued from the terms of their vow by Rabbinical sophistry.

16. 'The son of Paul's sister.' – We know nothing else about him.
17. 'Paul called one of the centurions.' – If Paul could give commands to centurions he must have been considered important. It is usually thought that Luke was present at this scene in the Fort, so vividly described. Perhaps he was there to give medical attention to Paul.
24. 'Provide mounts for Paul.' – Presumably only one for Paul, and the others for Luke and Aristarchus, also with him.
24. The Governor Felix. – Felix and his brother Pallas had both been slaves of Antonia, the mother of the Emperor Claudius, and had been freed by her. Felix held military command in Samaria under the procurator Cumanus, and was appointed procurator himself in 52. He became very unpopular with the Jews. Tacitus wrote of him, 'He revelled in cruelty and lust, and wielded the power of a king with the mind of a slave.' His third wife was Drusilla, the sister of King Agrippa II (24. 24).
25. 'He also wrote a letter, to this effect.' – The letter is so typical of officialdom that one feels it must be genuine, though how Luke gained access to it is not known. Particularly amusing is the intentional ambiguity of the participle 'learning' in the sentence 'I came and rescued him with the guard, learning that he was a Roman citizen.' This can mean either, 'I learnt that he was a Roman citizen and so dashed to his rescue', or 'I rescued him, and subsequently learnt that he was a Roman citizen.' The first interpretation is the natural one, and implies vigilant and prompt action in the interests of the citizens of Rome, but the second one, less favourable to Claudius Lysias, is the truth.
29. 'He was not accused of any crime punishable by death or imprisonment.' – Luke all along is careful to point out Paul's innocence in the eyes of impartial officials.

24

- 2, 3. 'Your Excellency Felix, we are humbly grateful, now and always, for the profound peace...' – Tertullus' speech is ornate, and begins with sycophantic flattery. Felix' rule was not a time of 'peace', especially towards the end, though it is true that he had in his first years suppressed some brigands.

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5. 'This man, we have found ...' – The accusations against Paul are three: (1) He stirred up sedition, which was equivalent to treason against the Emperor and Rome. A similar charge had finally frightened Pontius Pilate into handing Jesus over to his death. (2) He was a ringleader of the sect of the 'Nazarenes', which the prosecution wished to demonstrate was a new and unauthorized sect, and not part of the 'permitted religion' of Judaism. (3) He had attempted to bring a Gentile into the Temple. For a Gentile to ENTER the inner courts was death – but the prosecution had no Gentile prisoner or witness.
6. 'We of course arrested him.' – A euphemism, in view of what really happened.
- 6–8. 'We wanted to try him by our own Law ... case to you' – This passage is not found in the oldest MSS., but has the ring of truth, especially the account of Lysias' 'considerable violence' (in preventing a lynching).
10. 'Paul now began his defence.' – This is Paul's third appearance before a Roman Governor. Felix, however, was not a nobleman like Sergius Paulus and Gallio, but a freedman 'with the mind of a slave'. Paul can scarcely bring himself to utter the conventional opening politenesses. He proceeds immediately to answer the charges, denying the first, admitting the second with qualifications, and vehemently rejecting the third.
15. 'The hope that God will grant a resurrection to the good and the wicked alike.' – The last three words spoken no doubt with a searching look at his judge.
- 18, 19. 'But some Jews from Asia ... Why aren't they here ... ?' – Paul's indignation makes him break off his sentence to pose the unanswerable question: where are the witnesses of the prosecution?
22. 'Felix, who had a fairly accurate knowledge of the Way, adjourned the hearing.' – He must have acquired it from his residence in the country and from his Jewish wife Drusilla. He knew that there were thousands of Christians in Judaea whom the Sanhedrin were NOT prosecuting. On the evidence Paul was innocent. But Felix was a coward. He did not want to offend the supreme Jewish authority, and so adjourned the case on the pretext that Claudius Lysias was not present.
23. 'Paul should be kept in custody but allowed some freedom.' – Evidently 'open arrest'. Paul probably lived in lodgings, as later in Rome. It is usually supposed that he was chained to a Roman soldier night and day all the years in Caesarea and Rome. H. V.

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Morton points out that no one with experience of the army and soldiers can believe that. On public occasions no doubt he was chained up for the look of the thing.

24. 'Felix, with his wife Drusilla.' – Drusilla was his third wife, having left her husband to marry him.
25. 'When Paul began to discourse of the good life, self-control, and the judgement to come, Felix became alarmed.' – Evidently Felix had some sort of conscience and fear of Hell. Rackham drily says, 'The first two chapters of the Epistle to the Romans show us how the apostle could treat the subject.' But Felix was shallow and corrupt. Although he was interested enough to listen occasionally to Paul he was not converted, did not release him, and did not insist on the completion of the trial.
26. 'Especially as he was hoping for a bribe.' – Luke's final comment on Felix. Incidentally, this is yet another indication that Paul was now well-off.
27. 'Two years passed.' – It has been suggested that Luke occupied some of the time in composing his Gospel and much of the 'Acts'.
27. 'Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus.' – The date was probably 58 or 59. Felix was recalled to Rome to answer charges brought by the Jews: in suppressing a riot between the Gentiles and the Jews in Caesarea he had favoured the Gentiles and his soldiers had massacred many of the Jews. He escaped punishment through the influence of his brother Pallas. Festus proved a better Governor, but unfortunately died a few years after his appointment.

25

- 1, 2. 'Two days after arriving ... Festus ... went up to Jerusalem, where the Chief Priests ... laid their case against Paul before him.' – The energetic and conscientious new Governor lost no time in going up to the Jewish capital of his Province, and the Jews, still implacable, acted immediately, while he was still inexperienced.
8. 'In his defence Paul said ...' – The same three charges as before.
9. 'Festus, however, hoping to gain popularity with the Jews.' – This seems rather a biased view of Festus' motives. It is true that Festus considered Paul innocent of any ordinary crime, but he was baffled by the religious accusations, and probably thought that if the distinguished representatives of the supreme Jewish Council unanimously considered him guilty they were surely right. Anyway

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the alleged crime had been committed in Jerusalem, and the case should properly be conducted there, and he himself would be present as judge and could see that justice was done.

10. '“I am standing in the court of Caesar,” Paul replied, “and that is where I ought to be tried.”’ – Paul was afraid that if the case was transferred to Jerusalem the Jews would stage a passionate and stormy scene, as they had done at the trial of Jesus, and that the new Governor might prove another Pontius Pilate and hand him over to his death although convinced of his innocence. Hence: ‘I appeal to Caesar,’ ‘*Caesarem appello*’ – two words of immense power. This right of appeal to the Emperor was a long-standing right of Roman citizens. The appeal could be made at any stage of a trial, even after the verdict, and it meant that all proceedings stopped and the prisoner, regarded as still innocent, was conveyed to Rome for trial. Most Jews, especially those who were not Roman citizens, that is the vast majority, would have regarded Paul as an apostate for making the appeal to Caesar. But Paul was determined to vindicate himself and his gospel. Moreover the Lord in a vision (23. 11) had told Paul that he would ‘bear witness’ to him in Rome, and the only way of escaping death and reaching Rome was by this appeal. The Emperor at the time was Nero, who succeeded his stepfather Claudius in 54. At this stage, however, he was young and (fairly) innocent.
13. ‘After a few days King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea on a state visit to Festus.’ – Herod Agrippa II was the last and probably the best of the long bad line of Herods. His father Herod Agrippa I had died at Caesarea (‘eaten of worms’ – 12. 20–23) in 44 while he was a boy of 17 at Rome, being brought up in the Imperial Court. In the A.D. 50s he was given various principalities in northern Palestine by Claudius and his successor Nero. Subsequently to the present occasion he did his best to prevent the Jewish uprising of 66, but when it occurred remained loyal to Rome.
13. Bernice. – She was his sister (as was Drusilla). She had in her teens married her uncle Herod king of Chalcis, but on his death lived with her brother Agrippa in Rome – incestuously, rumour had it. She remarried but soon left her husband and returned again to her brother. She too subsequently tried to prevent the Jewish rebellion. Later she became the mistress of Titus, the son of the Emperor Vespasian, and lived with him in Rome, but when he succeeded his father had to leave him because of the scandal.
23. ‘Entered the audience chamber with the military tribunes and dignitaries of the city.’ – This would have been in Herod’s Palace,

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now the residence of the Roman Governor. There was a large garrison in Caesarea, five cohorts, so presumably five tribunes.

26

1. '“You have permission to state your case,” Agrippa said to Paul.’ – Of course there was no necessity for Paul to say anything, as he had appealed to the Emperor. But it is typical of him that he does speak – and use the opportunity to vindicate the gospel and even try to convert his audience. Jesus had refused to speak to Agrippa’s granduncle Herod Antipas, as he considered words to ‘that fox’ useless. Paul clearly took a different view of this Herod.
- 6–10. ‘It is BECAUSE I hope for the fulfilment of the promise ... acted on my convictions.’ – This passage, especially verses 8 and 9, is difficult, partly because links in the thought have been omitted. The sense seems to be: ‘I have always been a strict Jew, and ironically enough it was that very strictness that is responsible for my being on trial now. The Jews throughout their history have always looked for the regeneration of Israel through the coming of the Messiah. The Messiah has now come, proof of which is the fact of his resurrection. And now you Jews won’t believe in or accept him! It is true that at the time I too refused to believe in him, and did my best to crush his influence and suppress his followers.’
7. ‘Ardently worshipping God day and night.’ – One thinks of Simeon and Anna (Luke 2).
- 10, 11. ‘Voted for their execution, In every synagogue ... foreign cities.’ – Each of these statements contains an exaggeration of the truth. Paul is carried away by his own oratory.
12. ‘That is how I came to be travelling to Damascus’ etc. – This is the third account of Paul’s conversion, and differs from the others in several respects.
14. ‘You only hurt yourself by kicking against the goad.’ – Authorized Version, ‘It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.’ This was a Greek proverb. A goad is a pointed stick used for urging on recalcitrant oxen or mules. The implication of the words is interesting. An ox knows where he ought to be going (even though he may be unwilling to go) so the phrase implies that for some time Paul had known where he ought to be going – along the road pointed out by Stephen and the other Christians. His conversion in fact was not as sudden as is usually supposed.
16. ‘But get up and *stand on your feet* ...’ etc. – This speech combines

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the instructions given by the Lord at the time, through Ananias, and in the Temple. The quotations are from Ezek. 2. 1; Jer. 1. 8 and 1 Chron. 16. 35; Jer. 1. 7; Isa. 42. 7 and 16.

24. 'Festus cried out loudly, "Paul, you're mad. Your great learning is turning you mad."' – Festus was no intellectual. He shows the lowbrow's typical embarrassment when confronted by ideas. He couldn't stand any more. We have already seen that he was not intelligent enough even to write a report of the case for dispatch to Rome. Some commentators think that the remark was not offensive, because the ancients thought (like Shakespeare – 'The lunatic, the lover and the poet' etc.) that madness was allied with inspiration. I find this unlikely. Festus is clearly saying 'You're out of your mind.' It is interesting to note that Jesus was considered mad, and probably more seriously so, even by his relatives (Mark 3. 21; John 10. 20).
26. 'It did not happen in a corner.' – Another Greek proverbial saying.
27. 'Do you believe in the Prophets, King Agrippa? I know you do!' – Paul in fact says, 'Are you a good Jew? If so you could be a good Christian, for the Prophets looked forward to Christ.' Agrippa was evidently embarrassed by this searching question, delivered publicly in front of so august an assemblage, and refused to take it seriously. He parries with a joke, the meaning of which is obscure. It may mean: 'A little more persuasion and you will make me a Christian too' (an ironical equivalent of the Authorized Version 'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian'). What I think Agrippa actually said was 'In a little while you'll persuade me that I AM a Christian,' but I cannot make the Greek mean this.
29. "'I would to God," Paul said, "that I could persuade you, either in one word or many, to become what I am – though not in chains."' – Paul picks up Agrippa's phrase and plays on it, but behind the pun is deadly seriousness; he refuses to come down to Agrippa's bantering plane. He raises his chained hand, and then silence fell on the best speech the audience chamber in Herod's Palace had ever heard. Then the King got up, unable to stand any more, and was promptly followed by Festus, and the proceedings were concluded.
32. 'This man could have been set free, if he had not appealed to Caesar.' – Perhaps they had re-entered the chamber for the delivery of this verdict on the inquiry. Three Roman authorities had now declared Paul innocent. It was of course as well that Paul had appealed, for if he had been set free he would soon have been assassinated.

- 1, 2. 'Paul and some other prisoners were handed over to a centurion of the Augustan Cohort called Julius. We went on board...' – The last 'we-passage' ended with the arrival in Jerusalem (21. 18), though it is very probable that Luke had been with or near Paul ever since. It is just possible that like Aristarchus (v. 2) he was a 'fellow-prisoner', as being one of the Gentiles involved in Paul's alleged sacrilege. Aristarchus is later mentioned as a 'fellow-prisoner' of Paul's in Rome (Col. 4. 10). The remaining prisoners were probably being sent to Rome for use as lion-fodder in the arena. Research by Mommsen had revealed that the 'Augustan Cohort' was probably a popular name for the corps of officer-couriers officially called the *Frumentarii* ('Corn-men') or *Peregrini* ('Travellers'). They were something like our R.A.S.C., and had originally been formed to see to the commissariat of the Roman Army, but had later become the Special Service Messengers of the Emperor (hence 'Augustan').
2. 'A ship from Adramyttium.' – This was a port in Mysia opposite Lesbos. The ship was evidently a slow coasting vessel, and Julius was hoping for, and later achieved, a trans-shipment to a faster ship making straight for Italy.
3. 'Next day we put in at Sidon, where with great kindness Julius allowed Paul to go and be cared for by his friends.' – This is the first of several indications that Julius became a friend and admirer of Paul. Paul was evidently weak or ill at this time. Sidon is seventy miles from Caesarea. The same westerly wind that enabled them to cover the distance in one day proved a trouble and danger in the days to come.
4. 'Contrary winds forced us to keep to the sheltered side of Cyprus.' – Ramsay points out that this statement indicates Luke's unfamiliarity with the Levant seas. Ships would invariably keep to the east of Cyprus, and then hug the coasts of Pamphylia and Cilicia, relying on off-shore breezes and westerly currents. The ship from Alexandria that they met at Myra would have had a good run due north, with a westerly wind.
5. Myra in Lycia. – There the centurion found a ship from Alexandria sailing for Italy. The ship was a cornship (v. 38), one of the great fleet that supplied Rome from Egypt, her main granary. Myra was a regular port of call for ships from Alexandria, as in those days the direct route would have been folly, at least at this time of year, early September.

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7. 'After sailing slowly for many days we managed to reach a point off Cnidus.' – The wind was evidently north-west, the prevailing wind at the time of year. Cnidus was at the western tip of Asia Minor, and once past it they were exposed to the full force of the wind, which drove them south to Cape Salmone at the eastern extremity of Crete.
8. 'Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea.' – Fair Havens was a small bay providing only moderate shelter. (It still retains its name.) Lasea was probably only a hamlet, and is now in ruins. It is evident that the sailors, even apart from considerations of safety, thought Lasea a dismal place in which to spend the winter, and preferred the larger and livelier port of Phoenix, further along the coast.
9. 'Even the Fast of the Atonement was past.' – The Fast was observed annually by the Jews as a general atonement for all their sins (Lev. 16). It fell late in September or early in October. In A.D. 59 it fell on October 5.
11. 'The centurion ... paid more heed to the pilot and the ship-owner than to Paul.' – Ship-owners often acted as captains of their ships. The centurion was in charge, however, as being the senior official on board. It appears that he held a conference, to which he invited the experienced traveller Paul; Paul advocated no further sailing at all, the majority favoured sailing as far as Phoenix and stopping the winter there.
12. 'Phoenix – another harbour in Crete, facing west.' – Literally 'facing the north-west and the south-west winds'. Phoenix is probably the modern Lutro, but if so Luke is wrong: it faces east.
16. Cauda. – An island off Crete.
- 16, 17. 'We managed ... to haul in the ship's boat. They hoisted it.' – Luke's rapid changes from 'we' to 'they' and back in this chapter indicate his scrupulous honesty in describing nautical operations in which he did or did not have a share. 'Any landlubber could haul on a rope' (Bruce).
17. 'So they took down the gear and were carried before the wind.' – They wanted to have just enough sail to let them make some points against the wind and steer west in front of the E.N.E. wind. It has been reckoned that, sailing eight degrees N. of W., at 1½ m.p.h., it would take such a ship fourteen days to reach Malta.
- 21–24. 'You men should have listened to what I said ... "For your sake God will save the lives of everyone on board."' – Paul sometimes found it difficult to resist boasting.
27. 'The sailors had the feeling that they were approaching land.' – Presumably they heard breakers on Koura Point.

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29. 'They dropped four anchors from the stern.' – If they had adopted the usual course and dropped anchor from the bow the ship might have veered round in the night and been in the disastrous position of facing the land with her stern. Before they anchored they lashed the steering-paddles to prevent damage to them from the anchor chains. In verse 40 they *unlash* them.
31. 'Unless they stay in the ship you have no chance of being saved.' – If the sailors had been allowed to escape alone there would have been no one capable of manning the ship in the morning. The words have become a motto for Church unity.
34. '*Not a hair of any of your heads shall perish.*' – A Jewish saying.
39. 'They noticed a bay with a beach.' – There is a bay in Malta still called St Paul's Bay. A naval man called James Smith, in a book written over a hundred years ago but still the best authority – *The Voyage and Shipwreck of St Paul* – gives evidence for believing the bay is rightly named. W. Burridge, *Seeking the Site of St Paul's Shipwreck*, maintains that Mellicha Bay, the next bay north, was the scene of the wreck, but his arguments are not convincing.
41. 'But unluckily they encountered a spot where two currents met.' – Literally, 'a two-seaed place'. Smith thought this described the narrow channel that separates the tiny island of Salomonetta from Malta, but it is difficult to see how the ship could have been driven on to this spot from its night anchorage by an E.N.E. wind.
- 43, 44. 'He told those who could swim to jump overboard first and make for the shore, and the rest to follow on planks or other objects from the ship.' – Wise orders. One would not want 276 men all in the water at once, buffeted by each other's planks. Anyway there would not have been enough 'objects' to go round.

28

- 1, 2. 'It was Malta. The natives...' – Luke uses a derogatory word, *barbaroi*, applied by the Greeks to all who did not speak Greek. The Maltese, however, were far from savages, as the narrative shows. They came originally from Phoenicia, and had been governed successively by the Greeks, the Carthaginians, and the Romans.
4. 'The natives ... said to each other, "The man must be a murderer."' – They saw that Paul was one of a group of prisoners, perhaps, Rackham suggests, from his chain. It is difficult to imagine, however, that he had been handcuffed to a soldier during the preceding fortnight.

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7. 'The chieftain of the island, whose name was Poplius.' – He was probably a Cretan who liked to call himself by the Roman name Publius but was familiarly known to the islanders by the Greek form of it, Poplius.
11. 'An Alexandrian ship ... the *Heavenly Twins*.' – No doubt another cornship. The twins were Castor and Pollux, the patrons of sailors. The sign of the Zodiac named after them, *Gemini*, was considered a good omen in stormy weather.
13. Puteoli. – A port in the bay of Naples, the main port of Rome, larger than Rome's other port Ostium, on the Tiber.
15. 'The Brotherhood there.' – How Christianity came to be established in Rome is not known. It is possible that the visitors from Rome who were present at the first Christian Pentecost in Jerusalem brought it. Tradition has it that Peter had already gone to Rome. Anyway, even a few years before this date the Christians were so well established in Rome that Paul addressed his great general doctrinal Epistle to them. It is clear from verses 21 and 22 that communications between the churches of Rome and Jerusalem were almost non-existent. It is likely that most of the Roman Christians were Gentiles, for the Jews had been banished from Rome by Claudius in A.D. 49. Christian Jews who subsequently filtered back probably started new churches of their own instead of rejoining or joining existing Gentile Christian churches.
15. 'When he saw them Paul thanked God and his spirits revived.' – Paul was probably wondering what sort of a reception he would be given by the Jews and Christians of Rome. No doubt too he was apprehensive about his forthcoming trial.
16. 'The centurion handed the prisoners over to the Commanding Officer.' – This sentence does not appear in all the MSS. The officer mentioned was presumably the C.O. of the Augustan Cohort, to which Julius belonged.
21. "'On our part," they answered him, "we have had no letters about you from Judaea."' – It is surprising that the Jerusalem Jews had not written off more than two years ago. Presumably they had given up hope of securing a conviction after hearing Festus and Agrippa express their opinion of Paul's innocence. Moreover, Roman Law discouraged informers by laying down heavy penalties against unsuccessful prosecutors.
22. 'However, as all we know of this sect is that it is universally attacked ...' – It is more than likely that the Jews were feigning ignorance, but see note on the Claudian edict in verse 15.
25. 'The words of the Holy Spirit in the mouth of Isaiah the Prophet

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to your fathers were right.' – Jesus had been the first to refer Isaiah's prophecy (Isa. 6. 9 f.) to unbelieving Jews, and all four gospels record the occasion. Paul had quoted it once already in his Letter to the Romans (11. 8), and now he quotes it again to the Jews themselves in the capital itself. In this way he marks the final rejection of the Messiah by the Jews, and also marks what appears to be his own final rejection of them, indicated by his reference to 'your fathers' instead of 'our fathers'. The rejection by the Jewish people of their Saviour is a mystery, and Isaiah's words state but do not explain the mystery. Jesus, followed by Paul, showed that the rejection was foreknown by God, because prophesied beforehand by Isaiah.

28. '*This gift of God's salvation has been offered to the Gentiles; and they WILL hear.*' – From evil comes forth good. The Jewish rejection of the gift led to its offer to the Gentiles and their acceptance of it. This too God foresaw, and the prophets foretold (Ps. 67. 2).
30. 'For two whole years Paul remained in Rome at his lodgings.' – The reason for this delay in Imperial justice is unknown. Perhaps Nero was otherwise engaged. Perhaps the Jews of Jerusalem dropped their case.
31. '... without let or hindrance.' – With this legal phrase the 'Acts' ends. We have become so interested in Paul personally that we forget that to Luke, at least for the purposes of his book, Paul was just one of a relay of apostles carrying the torch of the gospel. The 'Acts' is the history not of Paul but of the Holy Spirit and the Church. In these last lines Paul is not Paul alone, he is the Church, the Church which although hemmed in by a hostile world goes on with its task of preaching openly and fearlessly to all who come to it. So the 'Acts' ends as it began, with Christ and the Kingdom.